THE

YOUNG DUKE.

"A moral Tale, though gay."

BY THE AUTHOR OF "VIVIAN GREY."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THERE is a partial distress, or universal,—and the affairs of India must really be settled; but we must also be amused. I send over my quota; for, though absent, I am a patriot; besides I am desirous of contributing to the diffusion of Useful Knowledge.

I have only one observation to make, and that is quite unnecessary, because no one will attend to it; therefore I suppress it. The great mass of my readers (if I have a mass, as I hope,) will attribute the shades that flit about these volumes to any substances they please. That smaller portion of society, who are most

competent to decide upon the subject, will instantly observe, that however I may have availed myself of a trait, or an incident, and often inadvertently, the whole is ideal. To draw caricatures of our contemporaries is not a very difficult task: it requires only a small portion of talent, and a great want of courtesy.

The gentle reader will, I am sure, not forget that I do not enjoy the advantage of supervising this work through the Press.

In the absence of the author, who is abroad, the Publishers think it necessary to add, that the present novel was written before the accession of his present Majesty. The reader, as he peruses the volumes, will see the necessity of this explanation.



THE YOUNG DUKE.

BOOK THE FIRST.

CHAP. I.

GEORGE AUGUSTUS FREDERICK, DUKE of ST. JAMES, completed his twenty-first year, an event which created as great a sensation among the aristocracy of England as the Norman Conquest, or the institution of Almack's. A minority of twenty years had converted a family, always among the wealthiest of Great Britain, into one of the richest in Europe. The Duke of St. James possessed estates in the North and in the West of England, besides a whole province in Ireland. In London, there

was a very handsome square and four streets all made of bricks, which brought him in yearly more cash than all the palaces of Vicenza are worth in fee-simple, with those of the Grand Canal of Venice to boot. As if this were not enough, he was an hereditary patron of internal navigation; and although perhaps in his two palaces, three castles, four halls, and lodges *ad libitum*, there were more fires burnt than in any other establishment in the Empire, this was of no consequence, because the coals were his own. His rent-roll exhibited a sum total, very neatly written, of two hundred thousand pounds; but this was independent of half a million in the funds, which I had nearly forgotten, and which remained from the accumulations occasioned by the unhappy death of his father.

The late Duke of St. James had one sister, who was married to the Earl of Fitz-pompey. To the great surprise of the world—to the perfect astonishment of the brother-in-law—the

Lordship was not appointed guardian to the infant minor. The Earl of Fitz-pompey had always been on the best possible terms with his Grace: the Countess had, only the year before his death, accepted, from his fraternal hand, a diamond necklace with the most perfect satisfaction: the Lord Viscount St. Maurice, future chief of the House of Fitz-pompey, had the honour not only of being his nephew, but his godson. Who could account, then, for an action so perfectly unaccountable! It was quite evident that his Grace had no intention of dying.

The guardian, however, that he did appoint, was a Mr. Dacre, a Catholic gentleman of very ancient family, and very large fortune, who had been the companion of his travels, and was his neighbour in his family county. Mr. Dacre had not been honoured with the acquaintance of Lord Fitz-pompey previous to the decease of his noble friend; and after that event, such an acquaintance would probably not have been productive of very agreeable reminiscences. For

from the moment of the opening of the fatal will, the name of Dacre was wormwood to the house of St. Maurice. Lord Fitz-pompey, who, though the brother-in-law of a Whig Magnate, was a Tory, voted against the Catholics with renewed fervor.

Shortly after the death of his friend, Mr. Dacre married a beautiful and noble lady of the house of Howard, who, after having presented him with a daughter, fell ill, and became that extremely common character, a confirmed invalid. In the present day, and especially among women, one would almost suppose that health was a state of unnatural existence. The illness of his wife, and the non-possession of parliamentary duties, rendered Mr. Dacre's visits to his town mansion extremely to resemble those of an angel, and the mansion in time was let.

The young Duke, with the exception of an occasional visit to his uncle, Lord Fitz-pompey, passed the early years of his life at Castle Dacre. At seven years of age, he was sent to

a preparatory school at Richmond, which was, entirely devoted to the early culture of the nobility; and where the Principal, the Reverend Doctor Coronet, was so extremely exclusive in his system, that it was reported that he had once refused the son of an Irish peer. Miss Coronet fed her imagination with the hope of meeting her father's noble pupils in after life, and in the mean time read fashionable novels.

The moment that the young Duke was settled at Richmond, all the intrigues of the Fitz-pompey family were directed to that quarter; and as Mr. Dacre was by nature the most unsuspicious of human beings, and was even extremely desirous that his ward should cultivate the friendship of his only relatives, the St. Maurice family had the gratification, as they thought, of completely deceiving him. Lady Fitz-pompey called twice a-week at Crest House, with a copious supply of pine-apples or *bonbons*, and the Rev. Dr. Coronet bowed

in adoration. Lady Isabella St. Maurice gave a china cup to Mrs. Coronet, and Lady Augusta, a paper-cutter to Miss. The family was secured. All discipline was immediately set at defiance, and the young Duke passed the greater part of the half-year with his affectionate relations. His Grace, charmed with the *bonbons* of his aunt, and the kisses of his cousins, which were even sweeter than the sugar-plums; delighted with the pony of St. Maurice, which, of course, immediately became his own; and inebriated by the attentions of his uncle, who, at eight years of age, treated him, as his Lordship styled it, "like a man;" contrasted this life of early excitement with what now appeared the gloom and the restraint of Castle Dacre, and he soon entered into the conspiracy, which had long been hatching, with genuine enthusiasm. He wrote to his guardian, and obtained an easy permission to spend his vacation with his uncle. Thus, through the united indulgence of Dr. Coronet and Mr.

Dacre, the Duke of St. James became a member of the family of St. Maurice.

No sooner had Lord Fitz-pompey secured the affections of the ward, than he entirely changed his system towards the guardian. He wrote to Mr. Dacre, and, in a manner equally kind and dignified, courted his acquaintance. He dilated upon the extraordinary, though extremely natural, affection which Lady Fitz-pompey entertained for the only offspring of her beloved brother,—upon the happiness which the young Duke enjoyed with his cousins,—upon the great and evident advantages which his Grace would derive from companions of his own age,—of the singular friendship which he had already formed with St. Maurice; and then, after paying Mr. Dacre many compliments upon the admirable manner in which he had already fulfilled the duties of his important office, and urging the lively satisfaction that a visit from their brother's friend would confer both upon Lady Fitz-pompey and himself, he

requested permission for his nephew to renew the visit in which he had been "so happy!" The Duke seconded the Earl's diplomatic scrawl in the most graceful round-text. The masterly intrigues of Lord Fitz-pompey, assisted by Mrs. Dacre's illness, which daily increased, and which rendered the most perfect quiet indispensable, were successful, and the young Duke arrived at his twelfth year without revisiting Dacre. Every year, however, when Mr. Dacre made a short visit to London, his ward spent a few days in his company, at the house of an old-fashioned Catholic nobleman, a visit which only afforded a dull contrast to the gay society, and constant animation, of his uncle's establishment.

It would seem that fate had determined to counteract the intentions of the late Duke of St. James, and to achieve those of the Earl of Fitz-pompey. At the moment that the noble minor was about to leave Dr. Coronet for Eton, Mrs. Dacre's state was declared hopeless, ex-

cept from the assistance of an Italian sky, and Mr. Dacre, whose attachment to his lady was of the most romantic description, determined to leave England immediately.

It was with deep regret that he parted from his ward, whom he tenderly loved; but all considerations merged in the paramount one; and he was consoled by the reflection, that he was, at least, left to the care of his nearest connections. Mr. Dacre was not unaware of the dangers to which his youthful pledge might be exposed, by the indiscriminate indulgence of his uncle, but he trusted to the impartial and inviolable system of a public school to do much; and he anticipated returning to England before his ward was old enough to form those habits which are generally so injurious to young nobles. In this hope, Mr. Dacre was disappointed. Mrs. Dacre lingered, and revived, and lingered, for nearly eight years, now filling the mind of her husband and her daughter with unreasonable hope, now delivering them to

that renewed anguish, that heart-rending grief, which the attendant upon a declining relative can alone experience, additionally agonizing, because it cannot be indulged. Mrs. Dacre died, and the widower of his daughter returned to England. In the mean time, the Duke of St. James had not been idle.

CHAPTER II.

THE departure, and, at length, the total absence of Mr. Dacre from England, yielded to Lord Fitz-pompey all the opportunity he had long desired. Hitherto he had contented himself with quietly sapping the influence of the guardian: now, that influence was openly assailed. All occasions were seized of depreciating the character of Mr. Dacre, and open lamentations were poured forth on the strange and unhappy indiscretion of the father, who had confided the guardianship of his son, not to his natural and devoted friends, but to a harsh and repulsive stranger. Long before the young Duke had completed his sixteenth year, all me-

mory of the early kindness of his guardian, if it had ever been imprinted on his mind, was carefully obliterated from it. It was constantly impressed upon him, that nothing but the exertions of his aunt and uncle had saved him from a life of stern privation and irrational restraint: and the man who had been the chosen and cherished confidant of the father, was looked upon, by the son, as a grim tyrant, from whose clutches he had escaped, and in which he determined never again to find himself. "Old Dacre," as Lord Fitz-pompey described him, was a phantom enough at any time to frighten his youthful ward. The great object of the uncle was to teaze and mortify the guardian into resigning his trust, and infinite were the contrivances to bring about this desirable result; but Mr. Dacre was obstinate, and although absent, contrived, by corresponding with his confidential agent, to carry on and complete the system for the management of the Hauteville property, which he had so beneficially established, and so long pursued.

In quitting England, although he had appointed a fixed allowance for his noble ward, Mr. Dacre had thought proper to delegate a discretionary authority to Lord Fitz-pompey to furnish him with what might be called extraordinary necessaries. His Lordship availed himself with such dexterity of this power, that his nephew appeared to be indebted for every indulgence to his uncle, who invariably accompanied every act of this description with an insinuation, that he might thank Mrs. Dacre's illness for the boon.

"Well, George," he would say to the young Etonian, "you shall have the boat, though I hardly know how I shall pass the account at head-quarters: and make yourself easy about Flash's bill, though I really cannot approve of such proceedings. Thank your stars you have not got to present that account to old Dacre. Well, I am one of those who are always indulgent to young blood. Mr. Dacre and I differ. He is your guardian, though. Every thing is in his power; but you shall never want while

your uncle can help you; and so run off to Caroline; for I see you want to be with her."

The Lady Isabella, and the Lady Augusta, who had so charmed Mrs. and Miss Coronet, were no longer in existence. Each had knocked down her earl. Brought up by a mother exquisitely adroit in female éducation, the Ladies St. Maurice had run but a brief, though a brilliant, career. Beautiful, and possessing every accomplishment which renders beauty valuable, under the unrivalled chaperonage of the Countess, they had played their popular parts without a single blunder. Always in the best set; never flirting with the wrong man, and never speaking to the wrong woman, all agreed that the Ladies St. Maurice had fairly won their coronets. Their sister, Caroline, was much younger; and although she did not promise to develope as unblemished a character as themselves, she was, in default of another sister, to be the Duchess of St. James.

Lady Caroline St. Maurice was nearly of the

same age as her cousin, the young Duke. They had been playfellows since his emancipation from the dungeons of Castle Dacre, and every means had been adopted by her judicious parents to foster and to confirm the kind feelings which had been first engendered by being partners in the same toys and sharing the same sports. At eight years old, the little Duke was taught to call Caroline his "wife;" and as his Grace grew in years, and could better appreciate the qualities of his sweet and gentle cousin, he was not disposed to retract the title. When George rejoined the courtly Coronet, Caroline invariably mingled her tears with those of her sorrowing spouse; and when the time at length arrived for his departure for Eton, Caroline knitted him a purse, and presented him with a watch-ribbon. At the last moment, she besought her brother, who was two years older, to guard over him, and soothed the moment of final agony by a promise to correspond. Had the innocent and soft-hearted girl been acquainted

with, or been able to comprehend, the purposes of her crafty parents, she could not have adopted means more calculated to accomplish them. The young Duke kissed her a thousand times, and loved her better than all the world.

In spite of his private house and his private tutor, his Grace did not make all the progress in his classical studies, which means so calculated to promote abstraction, and to assist acquirement, would seem to promise. The fact is, that as his mind began to unfold itself, he found a perpetual, and a more pleasing, source of study in the contemplation of himself. His early initiation in the school of Fitz-pompey had not been thrown away. He had heard much of nobility, and beauty, and riches, and fashion, and power: he had seen many individuals highly, though differently, considered for the relative quantities which they possessed of these qualities: it appeared to the Duke of St. James that, among the human race, he possessed the largest quantity of them all,——he cut his

private tutor, who had been appointed by Mr. Dacre, remonstrated to Lord Fitz-pompey, and with such success, that he thought proper shortly after to resign his situation. Dr. Coronet begged to recommend his son, the Rev. Augustus Granville Coronet. The Duke of St. James now got on rapidly, and also found sufficient time for his boat, his tandem, and his toilette.

The Duke of St. James appeared at Christ Church. His conceit kept him alive for a few terms It is delightful to receive the homage of two thousand young men of the best families in the country, to breakfast with twenty of them, and to cut the rest. In spite, however, of the glories of the golden tuft, and a delightful and peculiar private establishment, which he and his followers maintained in the chaste suburbs of Alma Mater, the Duke of St. James felt *ennuyé*'d. Consequently, one clear night, they set fire to a pyramid of caps and gowns in Peckwater. It was a silly thing for any one: it was a sad indiscretion for a Duke — but

it was done. Some were expelled; his Grace had timely notice, and having before cut the Oxonians, now cut Oxford.

Like all young men who get into scrapes, the Duke of St. James determined to travel. The Dacres returned to England before he did. He dexterously avoided coming into contact with them in Italy. Mr. Dacre had written to him several times during the first years of his absence; and although the Duke's answers were short, seldom, and not very satisfactory, Mr. Dacre persisted in occasionally addressing him. When, however, the Duke had arrived at an age when he was at least morally responsible for his own conduct, and entirely neglected answering his guardian's letters, Mr. Dacre became altogether silent.

The travelling career of the young Duke may be easily conceived by those who have wasted their time, and are compensated for that silliness by being called Men of the World. He gamed a little at Paris; he ate a good deal

at Vienna; and he studied the fine arts in Italy. In all places, his homage to the fair sex was renowned. The Parisian duchess, the Austrian princess, and the Italian countess, spoke in the most enthusiastic terms of the English nobility. At the end of three years, the Duke of St. James was of opinion, that he had obtained a great knowledge of mankind. He was mistaken: — travel is not, as is imagined, the best school for that sort of science. Knowledge of mankind is a knowledge of their passions. The traveller is looked upon as a bird of passage, whose visit is short, and which the vanity of the visited wishes to make agreeable. All is show, all false, and all made up. Coterie succeeds coterie, equally smiling — the explosions take place in his absence. Even a grand passion, which teaches a man more, perhaps, than any thing else, is not very easily excited by the traveller. The women know that, sooner or later, he must disappear; and though this is the case with all lovers, the sweet souls do not

like to miss the possibility of delusion. Thus the heroines keep in the back-ground, and the visitor, who is always in a hurry, falls into the net of the first flirtation that offers.

The Duke of St. James had, however, acquired a great knowledge—if not of mankind, at any rate of manners. He had visited all courts, and sparkled in the most brilliant circles of the Continent. He returned to his own country with a taste extremely refined, a manner most polished, and a person highly accomplished.

CHAPTER III.

A SORT of scrambling correspondence had been kept up between the young Duke and his cousin Lord St. Maurice, who had for a few months been his fellow-traveller. By virtue of these epistles, notice of the movements of their interesting relative occasionally reached the circle at Fitz-pompey House, although St. Maurice was very scanty in the much desired communications; because, like most young Englishmen, he derived singular pleasure from depriving his fellow-creatures of all that small information, which every one is so desirous to obtain. The announcement, however of the approaching arrival of the young Duke, was

duly made. Lord Fitz-pompey wrote, and offered apartments at Fitz-pompey House. They were refused. Lord Fitz-pompey wrote again to require instructions for the preparation of Hauteville House. His letter was unanswered. Lord Fitz-pompey was quite puzzled.

"When does your cousin mean to come, Charles?—Where does your cousin mean to go, Charles?—What does your cousin mean to do, Charles?" These were the hourly queries of the noble uncle.

At length, in the middle of January, when no soul expected him, the Duke of St. James dashed into London, and rolled to Mivart's. He was attended by a French cook, an Italian valet, a German jager, and a Greek page. At this dreary season of the year, this party was perhaps the most distinguished in the metropolis.

Three years' absence, and a little knowledge of life, had somewhat changed the Duke of St.

James' feelings with regard to his noble relative. He was quite disembarrassed of that Panglossian philosophy, which had hitherto induced him to believe, that the Earl of Fitzpompey was the best of all possible uncles. On the contrary, his Grace rather doubted whether the course which his relations had pursued towards him, was quite the most proper and the most prudent; and he took great credit to himself for having, with such unbounded indulgence, on the whole, deported himself with so remarkable a temperance. His Grace, too, could no longer innocently delude himself with the idea, that all the attention which had been lavished upon him, was solely occasioned by the impulse of consanguinity. Finally, the young Duke's conscience often misgave him, when he thought of Mr. Dacre. He determined therefore, on returning to England, not to commit himself too decidedly with the Fitzpompeys; and he had cautiously guarded himself from being entrapped into becoming their

guest. At the same time, the recollection of old intimacy, the general regard which he really felt for them all, and the sincere affection which he entertained for his cousin Caroline, would have deterred him from giving any outward signs of his altered feelings, even if other considerations had not intervened.

And other considerations did intervene. A Duke, and a young Duke, is a very important personage; but he must still be introduced. Even our hero might make a bad tack on his first cruize. Almost as important personages have committed the same blunder. Talk of Catholic emancipation! Oh! thou Imperial Parliament, emancipate the forlorn wretches who have got into a bad set! Even thy omnipotence must fail there! Now the Countess of Fitz-pompey was a brilliant of the first water. Under no better auspices could the Duke of St. James bound upon the stage. No man in town could arrange his club affairs for him with greater celerity, and greater tact, than the

Earl: and the married daughters were as much like their mother, as a pair of diamond ear-rings are like a diamond necklace.

The Duke, therefore, though he did not choose to get caged in Fitz-pompey House, sent his page, Spiridion, to the Countess, on a special embassy of announcement on the evening of his arrival; and on the following morning, his Grace himself made his appearance at an early hour.

Lord Fitz-pompey, who was as consummate a judge of men and manners as he was an indifferent speculator on affairs, and who was almost as finished a man of the world as he was an imperfect philosopher, soon perceived that considerable changes had taken place in the ideas, as well as in the exterior, of his nephew. The Duke, however, was extremely cordial, and greeted the family in terms almost of fondness. He shook his uncle by the hand with a fervour with which few noblemen had communicated for a considerable period; and he saluted

his aunt on the cheek with a delicacy which did not disturb the rouge. He turned to his cousin.

Lady Caroline St. Maurice was indeed a right beautiful being. Her, whom the young Duke had left merely a graceful and kindhearted girl, three years had changed into a somewhat dignified, but most lovely woman. A little perhaps of her native ease had been lost, a little perhaps of a manner rather too artificial had supplanted that exquisite address, which Nature alone had prompted: but at this moment, her manner was as unstudied and as genuine, as when they had gambolled together in the bowers of Malthorpe. Her white and delicate arm was extended with eager elegance; her full blue eye beamed with tender affection; and the soft blush that rose on her fair cheek. exquisitely contrasted with the clusters of her dark brown hair.

The Duke was struck, almost staggered, He remembered their infant loves; he recover-

ed with ready address. He bent his head with graceful affection, and pressed her lips. He repented that he had not accepted his uncle's offer of hospitality.

CHAPTER IV.

LORD FITZ-POMPEY was a little consoled for the change which he had observed in the character of the Duke, by the remembrance of the embrace with which his Grace had greeted Lady Caroline. Never indeed did a process which has, through the lapse of so many ages, occasioned so much delight, produce more lively satisfaction than the kiss in question. Lord Fitz-pompey had given up his plan of managing the Duke, after the family dinner which his nephew had the pleasure to join the first day of his first visit. The Duke and he were alone, and his Lordship availed himself of the rare opportunity with that adroitness for which he

was celebrated. Nothing could be more polite, more affable, more kind, than his Grace's manner; but the uncle cared little for politeness, or affability, or kindness. The crafty courtier wanted candour, and that was absent. That ingenuous openness of disposition, that frank and affectionate demeanour, for which the Duke of St. James had been so remarkable in his early youth, and with the aid of which Lord Fitz-pompey had built so many Spanish castles, had quite disappeared. Nothing could be more artificial, more conventional, more studied, than his whole deportment. In vain, Fitz-pompey pumped; the empty bucket invariably reminded him of his lost labour. In vain, his Lordship laid his little diplomatic traps to catch a limit of the purposes, or an intimation of the inclinations of his nephew. The bait was never seized. In vain, the Earl affected unusual conviviality, and boundless affection. The Duke sipped his claret, and admired his furniture. Nothing would do

An air of habitual calm, a look of kind condescension, and an inclination to a smile, which never burst into a beam, announced that the Duke of St. James was perfectly satisfied with existence, and conscious that he was himself, of that existence, the most distinguished ornament. In fact, he was a sublime coxcomb, one of those rare characters whose finished manner and shrewd sense combined, prevent their conceit from being contemptible. After many consultations, it was determined between the aunt and uncle, that it would be most prudent to affect a total non-interference with their nephew's affairs, and, in the mean time, to trust to the goodness of Providence, and the charms of Caroline.

Lady Fitz-pompey determined that the young Duke should make his *début* at once, and at her house. Although it was yet January, she did not despair of collecting a select band of guests —Brahmins of the highest caste. Some choice spirits were in office, like her lord, and there-

fore in town; others were only passing through; but no one caught a flying-fish with more dexterity than the Countess. The notice was short, the whole was unstudied. It was a felicitous impromptu; and twenty guests were assembled, who were the Corinthian capitals of the Temple of Fashion.

There was the Premier, who was invited, not because he was a Minister, but because he was a Hero. There was another Duke not less celebrated, whose palace was a breathing shrine, which sent forth the oracles of mode. True, he had ceased to be a young Duke, but he might be consoled for the vanished lustre of youth, by the recollection that he had enjoyed it, and by the present inspiration of an accomplished manhood. There were the Prince and the Princess Protocoli. His Highness, a first-rate diplomatist, unrivalled for his management of an opera; and his consort, with a countenance like Cleopatra, and a tiara like a constellation, famed alike for her shawls and her snuff. There were Lord

and Lady Bloomerly, who were the best friends on earth. My Lord, a sportsman, but soft withal; his talk, the Jockey Club, filtered through White's. My Lady, a little blue, and very beautiful. Their daughter, Lady Charlotte, rose by her mother's side, like a tall bud by a full-blown flower. There was the Viscountess Blaze, a peeress in her own right, and her daughter, Miss Blaze Dashaway, who, besides the glory of the future coronet, moved in all the confidence of independent thousands. There was the Marquess of Macaroni, who was at the same time a general, an ambassador, and a dandy; and who, if he had liked, could have worn twelve orders, but this day, being modest, only wore six. There, too, was the Marchioness, with a stomacher stiff with brilliants, extracted from the snuff-boxes presented to her husband at a Congress.

There was Lord Sunium, who was not only a peer, but a poet; and his lady, a Greek, who looked just finished by Phidias. There, too, was Pococurante, the Epicurean, and triple Mil-

lionaire, who, in a political country, dared to despise politics; in the most aristocratic of kingdoms, had refused nobility, and in a land which showers all its honours upon its cultivators, invested his whole fortune in the funds. He lived in a retreat like the villa of Hadrian, and maintained himself in an elevated position, chiefly by his wit, and, a little, by his wealth. There, too, was his noble wife, thorough bred to her fingers' tips, and beaming like the evening star, and his son, who was an M.P. and thought his father a fool. In short, our party was no common party, but a band who formed the very core of civilization,—a high court of last appeal, whose word was a fiat, whose sign was a hint, whose stare was death, and sneer—— damnation!

The Graces befriend me! I have forgotten the most important personage. I will venture to observe, that it is the first time in his life, that Charles Annesley has been neglected. It will do him good.

Dandy has been voted vulgar, and beau is

now the word. I doubt whether the revival will stand; and as for the exploded title, though it had its faults at first, the muse of Byron has made it not only English, but classical. However, I dare say, I can do without either of these words at present. Charles Annesley could hardly be called a dandy, or a beau. There was nothing in his dress; though some mysterious arrangement in his costume—some rare simplicity,—some curious happiness—always made it distinguished; there was nothing, however, in his dress which could account for the influence which he exercised over the manners of his contemporaries. Charles Annesley was about thirty. He had inherited from his father, a younger brother, a small estate; and though heir to a wealthy earldom, he had never abused what the world called "his prospects." Yet his establishment—his little house in May Fair—his horses—his moderate stud at Melton—were all unique, and every thing connected with him was unparalleled for its elegance, its invention, and

its refinement. But his manner was his magic. His natural and subdued nonchalance, so different from the assumed non-emotion of a mere dandy; his coldness of heart, which was hereditary, not acquired; his cautious courage, and his unadulterated self-love; had permitted him to mingle much with mankind without being too deeply involved in the play of their passions; while his exquisite sense of the ridiculous quickly revealed those weaknesses to him, which his delicate satire did not spare, even while it refrained from wounding. All feared, many admired, and none hated him. He was too powerful not to dread, too dexterous not to admire, too superior to hate. Perhaps the great secret of his manner was his exquisite superciliousness, a quality which, of all, is the most difficult to manage. Even with his intimates, he was never confidential, and perpetually assumed his public character with the private coterie which he loved to rule. On the whole, he was unlike any of the lead-

ing men of modern days, and rather reminded one of the fine gentlemen of our old brilliant comedy,—the Dorimants, the Bellairs, and the Mirabels.

Charles Anneslcy was a member of the distinguished party who were this day to decide the fate of the young Duke. I am not ashamed of my hero. Let him come forward!

His Grace moved towards them tall and elegant in figure, and with that air of affable dignity which becomes a noble, and which adorns a court,—none of that affected indifference which seems to imply, that nothing can compensate for the exertion of moving, and "which makes the dandy, while it mars the man." His large and somewhat sleepy grey eye, his clear complexion, his small mouth, his aquiline nose, his transparent forehead, his rich brown hair, and the delicacy of his extremities, presented when combined, a very excellent specimen of that style of beauty for which the nobility of England are remarkable. Gentle,—for he felt

the importance of the tribunal,—never loud, ready, yet a little reserved, he neither courted nor shunned examination. His finished manner, his experience of society, his pretensions to taste, the gaiety of his temper, and the liveliness of his imagination, gradually developed themselves with the developing hours.

The banquet was over: the Duke of St. James passed his examination with unqualified approval; and having been stamped at the Mint of Fashion, as a sovereign of the brightest die, he was flung forth, like the rest of his golden brethren, to corrupt the society of which he was the brightest ornament.

CHAPTER V.

THE morning after the initiatory dinner, the young Duke drove to Hauteville House, his family mansion, situated in his family square. His Grace particularly prided himself on his knowledge of the arts; a taste for which, among other things, he intended to introduce into England. Nothing could exceed the horror with which he witnessed the exterior of his mansion, except the agony with which he paced through the interior.

"Is this a palace?" thought the young Duke—"this hospital a palace!"

He entered. The marble hall—the broad and lofty double staircase painted in fresco, were not

unpromising, in spite of the dingy gilding; but with what a mixed feeling of wonder and disgust did the Duke roam through clusters of those queer chambers which, in England, are called drawing-rooms.

"Where are the galleries,—where the symmetrical saloons,—where the lengthened suite,—where the collateral cabinets, sacred to the statue of a nymph or the mistress of a painter, in which I have been accustomed to reside? What page would condescend to lounge in this antichamber? And is this gloomy vault, that you call a dining-room, to be my hall of Apollo? —Order my carriage."

The Duke dashed away in disgust, and sent immediately for Sir Carte Blanche, the successor, in England, of Sir Christopher Wren. His Grace communicated, at the same time, his misery and his grand views. Sir Carte was astonished with his Grace's knowledge, and sympathized with his Grace's feelings. He offered consolation, and promised estimates.

They came in due time. Hauteville House, in the drawing of the worthy Knight, might have been mistaken for the Louvre. Some adjoining mansions were, by some magical process for which Sir Carte was famous, to be cleared of their present occupiers, and the whole side of the square was, in future, to be the site of Hauteville House. The difficulty was great, but the object was greater. The expense, though the estimate made a bold attack on the half million, was a mere trifle, "*considering.*" The Duke was delighted. He condescended to make a slight alteration in Sir Carte's drawing, which Sir Carte affirmed to be a great improvement. Now it was Sir Carte's turn to be delighted. The Duke was excited by his architect's admiration, and gave him a dissertation on Schonnbrunn.

Although Mr. Dacre had been disappointed in his hope of exercising a personal influence over the education of his ward, he had been more fortunate in his plans for the management

of his ward's property. Perhaps there never was an instance of the opportunities afforded by a long minority having been used to greater advantage. The estates had been greatly increased and greatly improved; all and very heavy mortgages had been paid off, and the rents been fairly apportioned. Mr. Dacre, by his constant exertions and able dispositions, since his return to England, also made up for the neglect with which an important point had been a little treated; and at no period had the parliamentary influence of the house of Hauteville been so extensive, so decided, and so well bottomed, as when our hero became its chief.

In spite of his proverbial pride, it seemed that Mr. Dacre was determined not to be offended by the conduct of his ward. The Duke had not yet announced his arrival in England to his guardian; but about a month after that event, he received a letter of congratulation from Mr. Dacre, who, at the same time, expressed a desire to resign a trust into

his Grace's hand, which, he believed, had not been abused. The Duke, who rather dreaded an interview, wrote in return, that he intended very shortly to visit Yorkshire, when he should have the pleasure of availing himself of the kind invitation to Castle Dacre; and having thus, as he thought, dexterously got rid of the old gentleman for the present, he took a ride with Caroline St. Maurice.

CHAPTER VI.

PARLIAMENT assembled, the town filled, and every moment in the day of the Duke of St. James was engrossed. Sir Carte and his tribe filled up the morning. Then there were endless visits to endless visitors; dressing, riding, chiefly with Lady Caroline; luncheons, and the bow window at White's. Then came the evening with all its crash and glare; the banquet, the opera, and the ball.

The Duke of St. James took the oaths and his seat. He was introduced by Lord Fitz-pompey. He heard a debate. We laugh at such a thing, especially in the Upper House; but, on the whole, the affair is imposing, par-

ticularly if we take a part in it. Lord Ex-Chamberlain thought the nation going on wrong; and he made a speech full of currency and constitution. Baron Deprivyseal seconded him with great effect, brief but bitter, satirical and sore. The Earl of Quarterday answered these, full of confidence in the nation and in himself. When the debate was getting heavy, Lord Snap jumped up to give them something light. The Lords do not encourage wit, and so are obliged to put up with pertness. But Viscount Memoir was very statesmanlike, and spouted a sort of universal history. Then there was Lord Ego, who vindicated his character, when nobody knew he had one, and explained his motives, because his auditors could not understand his acts. Then there was a maiden speech, so inaudible, that it was doubted whether, after all, the young orator really did lose his virginity. In the end, up started the Premier, who having nothing to say, was manly, and candid,

and liberal; gave credit to his adversaries, and took credit to himself, and then the motion was withdrawn.

While all this was going on, some made a note, some made a bet; some consulted a book, some their ease; some yawned, a few slept: yet, on the whole, there was an air about the assembly, which can be witnessed in no other in Europe. Even the most indifferent looked as if he would come forward, if the occasion should demand him, and the most imbecile, as if he could serve his country, if it required him. When a man raises his eyes from his bench, and sees his ancestor in the tapestry, he begins to understand the pride of blood.

The young Duke had not experienced many weeks of his career, before he began to sicken of living in an hotel. Hitherto he had not reaped any of the fruits of the termination of his minority. He was a *cavalier seul*, highly considered, truly, but yet a mere member of society.

He had been this for years. This was not the existence to enjoy which he had hurried to England. He aspired to be society itself. In word, his tastes were of the most magnificent description, and he sighed to be surrounded by a court. As Hauteville House, even with Sir Carte's extraordinary exertions, could not be ready for his reception for three years, which to him appeared eternity, he determined to look about for an establishment. He was fortunate. A nobleman, who possessed an hereditary mansion of the first class, and much too magnificent for his resources, suddenly became diplomatic, and accepted an embassy. The Duke of St. James took every thing off his hands: house, furniture, wines, cooks, servants, horses. Sir Carte was sent in to touch up the gilding, and make a few temporary improvements; and Lady Fitz-pompey pledged herself to organize the whole establishment, ere the full season commenced, and the early Easter had elapsed, which had now arrived.

It had arrived, and the young Duke had departed to his chief family seat, Hauteville Castle, in Yorkshire. He intended, at the same time, to fulfil his long pledged engagement at Castle Dacre. He arrived at Hauteville amid the ringing of bells, the roasting of oxen, and the crackling of bonfires. The Castle, unlike most Yorkshire castles, was a Gothic edifice, ancient, vast, and strong; but it had received numerous additions in various styles of architecture, which were at the same time great sources of convenience, and great violations of taste. The young Duke was seized with a violent desire to live in a genuine Gothic castle: each day his refined taste was outraged by discovering Roman windows and Grecian doors. He determined to emulate Windsor, and he sent for Sir Carte.

Sir Carte came as quick as lightning after thunder. He was immensely struck with Hauteville, particularly with its capabilities. It was a superb place, certainly, and might be

rendered unrivalled. The situation seemed made for the pure Gothic. The left wing should decidedly be pulled down, and its site occupied by a Knight's hall; the old terrace should be restored; the donjon keep should be raised, and a gallery, three hundred feet long, thrown through the body of the castle. Estimates, estimates, estimates! But the time? This was a greater point than the expense. Wonders should be done. There were now five hundred men working for Hauteville House; there should be a thousand for Hauteville Castle. Carte Blanche, Carte Blanche, Carte Blanche!

On his arrival in Yorkshire, the Duke had learnt that the Dacres were in Norfolk on a visit. As the Castle was some miles off, he saw no necessity to make an useless exertion, and so he sent his jager with his card. He had now been ten days in his native county. It was dull, and he was restless. He missed the excitement of perpetual admiration, and his

eye drooped for constant glitter. He suddenly returned to town, just when the county had flattered itself that he was about to appoint his public days.

CHAPTER VII.

EASTER was over, the sun shone, the world was mad, and the young Duke made his *début* at Almack's. He determined to prove that he had profited by a winter at Vienna. His dancing was declared consummate. He galloped with grace and waltzed with vigor. It was difficult to decide which was most admirable, the elegance of his prance, or the precision of his whirl. A fat Russian Prince, a lean Austrian Count, a little German Baron, who, somehow or other, always contrived to be the most marked characters of the evening, disappeared in despair.

There was a lady in the room, who very

much attracted the notice of our hero, whom, as a hero, I will back against any one of his inches. As I am now approaching a catastrophe, I will take a new pen. She—the lady, not the pen—was a very remarkable personage. There are some sorts of beauty which defy description, and almost scrutiny. Some faces rise upon us in the tumult of life, like stars from out the sea, or as if they had moved out of a picture. Our first impression is any thing but fleshly. We are struck dumb—we gasp for breath—our limbs quiver,—a faintness glides over our frame—we are awed; instead of gazing upon the apparition, we avert the eyes, which yet will feed upon its beauty. A strange sort of unearthly pain mixes with the intense pleasure. And not till, with a struggle, we call back to our memory the commonplaces of existence, can we recover our commonplace demeanour. These, indeed, are rare visions—these, indeed, are early feelings, when our young existence leaps with

its mountain torrents; but as the river of our life rolls on, our eyes grow dimmer, or our blood more cold.

Some effect of this kind was produced on the Duke of St. James by the unknown dame. He turned away his head to collect his senses. His eyes again rally; and this time being prepared, he was more successful in his observations.

The lady was standing against the wall; a young man was addressing some remarks to her which apparently were not very interesting. She was tall and young, and as her tiara betokened, married; dazzling fair, but without colour; with locks like night, and features delicate, but precisely defined. Yet all this did not at first challenge the observation of the young Duke. It was the general and peculiar expression of her countenance, which had caused in him such emotion. There was an expression of resignation, or repose, or sorrow, or serenity, which in these excited

chambers, was strange, and singular, and lone. She gazed like some genius invisible to the crowd, and mourning over its degradation.

He stopped St. Maurice, as his cousin passed by, to enquire her name, and learnt that she was Lady Aphrodite Grafton, the wife of Sir Lucius Grafton.

"What, Lucy Grafton!" exclaimed the Duke. "I remember, I was his fag at Eton. He was a handsome dog,—but I doubt whether he deserves such a wife. Introduce me."

Lady Aphrodite received our hero with a gentle bow, and did not seem quite as impressed with his importance, as most of those to whom he had been presented in the course of the evening. The Duke had considerable tact with women, and soon perceived, that the common topics of a hack flirtation would not do in the present case. He was therefore very mild and modest, rather piquant, somewhat rational, and, apparently, perfectly unaffected.

Her Ladyship's reserve wore away. She refused to dance, but conversed with more animation. The Duke did not leave her side. The women began to stare, the men to bet: Lady Aphrodite against the field. In vain his Grace laid a thousand plans to arrange a tea-room *tête-à-tête*. He was unsuccessful. As he was about to return to the charge, her Ladyship desired a passer-by to summon her carriage. No time was to be lost. The Duke began to talk hard about his old friend and schoolfellow, Sir Lucius. A greenhorn would have thought it madness to take an interest in such a person, of all others; but women like you to enter their house as their husband's friend. Lady Aphrodite could not refrain from expressing her conviction that Sir Lucius would be most happy to renew his acquaintance with the Duke of St. James, and the Duke of St. James immediately said that he would take the earliest opportunity of giving him that pleasure.

CHAPTER VIII.

SIR LUCIUS GRAFTON was five or six years older than the Duke of St. James, although he had been his contemporary at Eton. He too had been a minor, and had inherited an estate capable of supporting the becoming dignity of an ancient family. In appearance, he was an Antinous. There was, however, an expression of firmness, almost of ferocity, about his mouth, which quite prevented his countenance from being effeminate, and broke the dreamy voluptuousness of the rest of his features. In mind, he was a *roué*. Devoted to pleasure, he had reached the goblet at an early age; and before he was five-and-twenty, procured for himself a

reputation which made all women dread, and some men shun him. In the very wildest moment of his career, when he was almost marked like Cain, he had met Lady Aphrodite Maltravers. She was the daughter of a nobleman, who justly prided himself, in a degenerate age, on the virtue of his house. Nature, as if in recompense for his goodness, had showered all her blessings on his only daughter. Never was daughter more devoted to a widowed sire—never was woman influenced by principles of purer morality.

This was the woman who inspired Sir Lucius Grafton with an ungovernable passion. Despairing of success by any other method, conscious that, sooner or later, he must, for family considerations, propagate future baronets of the name of Grafton, he determined to solicit her hand. But for him to obtain it, he was well aware was difficult. Confident in his person, his consummate knowledge of the female character, and his unrivalled powers of dissimu-

lation, Sir Lucius arranged his dispositions. The daughter feared, the father hated him. There was indeed much to be done; but the remembrance of a thousand triumphs supported the adventurer. Lady Aphrodite was at length persuaded, that she alone could confirm the reformation, which she alone had originated. She yielded to a passion, which her love of virtue had alone kept in subjection. Sir Lucius and Lady Aphrodite knelt at the feet of the old Earl. The tears of his daughter, ay! and of his future son-in-law—for Sir Lucius knew when to weep—were too much for his kind and generous heart. He gave them his blessing, which faltered on his tongue.

A year had not elapsed, ere Lady Aphrodite woke to all the wildness of a deluded woman. The idol in whom she had lavished all the incense of her innocent affections, became every day less like a true divinity. At length, even the ingenuity of passion could no longer disguise the hideous and bitter truth. She was

no longer loved. She thought of her father. Ah! what was the madness of her memory!

The agony of her mind disappointed her husband's hope of an heir, and the promise was never renewed. In vain, she remonstrated to the being to whom she was devoted: in vain, she sought, by meek endurance, again to melt his heart. It was cold—it was callous. Most women would have endeavoured to recover their lost influence by different tactics; some, perhaps, would have forgotten their mortification in their revenge. But Lady Aphrodite had been the victim of passion, and now was its slave. She could not dissemble.

Not so her spouse. Sir Lucius knew too well the value of a good character to part very easily with that which he had so unexpectedly regained. Whatever were his excesses, they were prudent ones. He felt that boyhood could alone excuse the folly of glorying in vice; and he knew that, to respect virtue, it was not absolutely necessary to be virtuous. No one was,

apparently, more choice in his companions than Sir Lucius Grafton; no husband was seen oftener with his wife; no one paid more respect to age, or knew better when to wear a grave countenance. The world praised the magical influence of Lady Aphrodite; and Lady Aphrodite, in private, wept over her misery. In public, she made an effort to conceal all she felt; and as it is a great inducement to every woman to conceal that she is neglected by the man whom she adores, her effort was successful. Yet her countenance might indicate that she was little interested in the scene in which she mixed. She was too proud to weep, but too sad to smile. Elegant and lone, she stood among her crushed and lovely hopes, like a column amid the ruins of a beautiful temple.

The world declared that Lady Aphrodite was desperately virtuous—and the world was right. A thousand fireflies had sparkled round this myrtle, and its fresh and verdant hue was still unsullied and unscorched. Not a very

accurate image, but pretty; and those who have watched a glancing shower of these glittering insects, will confess that, poetically, the bush might burn. The truth is, that Lady Aphrodite still trembled when she recalled the early anguish of her broken sleep of love, and had not courage enough to hope that she might dream again. Like the old Hebrews, she had been so chastened for her wild idolatry, that she dared not again raise an image to animate the wilderness of her existence. Man she, at the same time, feared and despised. Compared with her husband, all who surrounded her were, she felt, in appearance, inferior, and were, she believed, in mind, the same.

I know not how it is, but love at first sight is a subject of constant ridicule; but somehow, I suspect that it has more to do with the affairs of this world than we are willing to own. Eyes meet which have never met before; and glances thrill with expression which is strange. We contrast these pleasant sights, and new emo-

tions, with hackneyed objects and worn sensations. Another glance, and another thrill—and we spring into each other's arms. What can be more natural?

Ah, that we should awake so often to truth so bitter! Ah, that charm by charm should evaporate from the talisman which had enchanted our existence!'

And so it was with this sweet woman, whose feelings glow under my pen. She had repaired to a splendid assembly, to play her splendid part with the consciousness of misery—without the expectation of hope. She awaited, without interest, the routine which had been so often uninteresting; she viewed without emotion the characters which had never moved. A stranger suddenly appeared upon the stage, fresh as the morning dew, and glittering like the morning star. All eyes await—all tongues applaud him. His step is grace—his countenance is hope—his voice is music! And was such a being born only to deceive and be deceived?—

Was he to run the same false, palling, ruinous career, which had filled so many hearts with bitterness, and dimmed the radiancy of so many eyes! Never! The nobility of his soul spoke from his glancing eye, and treated the foul suspicion with scorn. Ah, would that she had such a brother to warn, to guide, to—love!

So felt the Lady Aphrodite! So felt,—we will not say, so reasoned. When once a woman allows an idea to touch her heart, it is miraculous with what rapidity the idea is fathered by her brain. All her experience, all her anguish, all her despair, vanished like a long frost, in an instant; and in a night. She felt a delicious conviction, that a knight had at length come to her rescue, a hero worthy of an adventure so admirable. The image of the young Duke filled her whole mind; she had no ear for others' voices; she mused on his idea with the rapture of a votary on the mysteries of a new faith.

Yet strange, when he at length approached

her,—when he addressed her,—when she replied to that mouth, which had fascinated even before it had spoken, she was cold, reserved, constrained. Some talk of the burning cheek and the flashing eye of passion; but if I were not a quiet man, and cared for these things, I should say, give me the woman who, when I approach her, treats me almost with scorn, and trembles, while she affects to disregard me.

Lady Aphrodite has returned home: she hurries to her apartment,—she falls into a sweet reverie,—her head leans upon her hand. Her *soubrette*, a pretty and chattering Swiss, whose republican virtue had been corrupted by Paris, as Rome by Corinth, endeavours to divert her lady's ennui: she excruciates her beautiful mistress with tattle about the admiration of Lord B——, and the sighs of Sir Harry. Her Ladyship reprimands her for her levity, and the *soubrette*, grown sullen, revenges herself for her mistress's reproof, by converting the sleepy process of brushing, into the most lively torture.

The Duke of St. James called upon Lady Aphrodite Grafton the next day, and at an hour when he trusted to find her alone. He was not disappointed. More than once, the silver-tongued pendule sounded during that somewhat protracted but most agreeable visit. He was, indeed, greatly interested by her, but he was an habitual gallant, and always began by feigning more than he felt. She, on the contrary, who was really in love, feigned much less. Yet she was no longer constrained, though calm. Fluent, and even gay, she talked as well as listened, and her repartees, more than once, put her companion on his mettle. She displayed a delicate and even luxurious taste, not only in her conversation, but — the Duke observed it with delight—in her costume. She had a passion for music and for flowers; she sang a romance, and she gave him a rose. He retired perfectly fascinated.

Oh! god—or gods of love!—for there are two Cupids—which of you it was that inspired

the Duke of St. James, I pretend not to decide. Perhaps, last night, it was thou, oh! son of Erebus and Nox! To-day, perhaps, it was the lady's *mind*. All I know is, that when I am led to the universal altar, I beg that both of ye will shoot your darts!

CHAPTER IX.

I FIND this writing not so difficult as I had imagined. I see the only way is to rattle on just as you talk. The moment that you anticipate your pen in forming a sentence, you get as stiff as a gentleman in stays. I use my pen as my horse; I guide it, and it carries me on.

Sir Lucius Grafton called on the Duke of St. James. They did not immediately swear an eternal friendship, like the immortal heroines of the Rovers, but they greeted each other with considerable warmth, talked of old times, and old companions, and compared their former sensations with their present. No one could be a more agreeable companion than Sir Lucius, and this day he left a very favourable

impression with his young friend. From this day, too, the Duke's visits at the Baronet's were frequent; and as the Graftons were intimate with the Fitz-pompeys, scarcely a day elapsed without his having the pleasure of passing a portion of it in the company of Lady Aphrodite: his attentions to her were marked, and sometimes mentioned. Lord Fitz-pompey was rather in a flutter. George did not ride so often with Caroline, and never alone with her. This was disagreeable; but the Earl was a man of the world, and a sanguine man withal. These things will happen. It is of no use to quarrel with the wind; and, for his part, he was not sorry that he had the honour of the Grafton acquaintance: it secured Caroline her cousin's company; and as for the *liaison*, if there were one, why it must end, and probably the difficulty of terminating it might even hasten the catastrophe which he had so much at heart. "So, Laura, dearest! let the Graftons be asked to most of our dinners."

In one of those rides to which Caroline was not admitted, for it was with Lady Aphrodite alone, the Duke of St. James took his way to the Regent's Park, a wild sequestered spot, whither he invariably repaired when he did not wish to be noticed; for the inhabitants of this pretty suburb are a distinct race, and although their eyes are not unobserving, from their inability to speak the language of London, they are unable to communicate their observations.

The spring sun was setting, and flung a crimson flush over the blue waters, and the white houses. The scene was rather imposing, and reminded our hero of days of travel. A sudden thought rushed into his head. Would it not be delightful to build a beautiful retreat in this sweet and retired land, and be able in an instant to fly from the formal magnificence of a London mansion? Lady Aphrodite was charmed with the idea; for the enamoured are always delighted with what is fanciful. The Duke determined immediately to convert the

idea into an object. To lose no time was his grand motto. As he thought that Sir Carte had enough upon his hands, he determined to apply to an artist whose achievements had been greatly vaunted to him by a very distinguished and very noble judge.

M. Bijou de Millecolonnes, Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, and member of the Academy of St. Luke's, except in his title, was the very antipodes of Sir Carte Blanche. Sir Carte was all solidity, solemnity, and correctness. Bijou de Millecolonnes, all lightness, gaiety, and originality. Sir Carte was ever armed with the Parthenon, Palladio, and St. Peter's. Bijou de Millecolonnes laughed at the ancients, called Palladio and Michel barbarians of the middle ages, and had himself invented an order. Bijou was not as plausible as Sir Carte; but he was infinitely more entertaining. Far from being servile, he allowed no one to talk but himself, and made his fortune by his elegant insolence. How singular it is that those who

love servility are always the victims of impertinence!

Gaily did Bijou de Millecolonnes drive his pea-green cabriolet to the spot in question. He formed his plan in an instant. "The occasional retreat of a noble should be something picturesque and poetical. The mind should be led to voluptuousness by exquisite associations, as well as by the creations of art. It is thus their luxury is rendered more intense by the reminiscences that add past experience to present enjoyment! For instance, if you sail down a river, imitate the progress of Cleopatra. And here—here, where the opportunity is so ample, what think you of reviving the Alhambra?"

Splendid conception! The Duke already fancied himself a Caliph. "Lose no time, Chevalier! Dig, plant, build!"

Nine acres were obtained from the Woods and Forests; mounds were thrown up, shrubs thrown in; the paths emulated the serpent;

the nine acres seemed interminable. All was surrounded by a paling eight feet high, that no one might pierce the mystery of the preparations.

A rumour was soon current, that the Zoological Society intended to keep a Bengal tiger *au naturel*, and that they were contriving a residence which would amply compensate him for his native jungle. The Regent's Park was in despair; the landlords lowered their rents, and the tenants petitioned the King. In a short time, some hooded domes, and some Saracenic spires rose to sight, and the truth was then made known, that the young Duke of St. James was building a villa. The Regent's Park was in rapture; the landlords raised their rents, and the tenants withdrew their petition.

CHAPTER X.

Mr. Dacre again wrote to the Duke of St. James. He regretted that he had been absent from home when his Grace had done him the honour of calling at Castle Dacre. Had he been aware of that intended gratification, he could with ease, and would with pleasure, have postponed his visit to Norfolk. He also regretted that it would not be in his power to visit London this season; and as he thought that no further time should be lost in resigning the trust with which he had been so honoured, he begged leave to forward his accounts to the Duke, and with them some notes, which he believed would convey some not unimportant

information to his Grace for the future management of his property. The young Duke took a rapid glance at the sum total of his rental, crammed all the papers into a cabinet, with a determination to examine them the first opportunity, and then rolled off to a morning concert, of which he was the patron.

The intended opportunity for the examination of the important papers was never caught, nor was it surprising that it escaped capture. It is difficult to conceive a career of more various, more constant, or more distracting excitement, than that in which the Duke of St. James was now engaged. His life was an ocean of enjoyment, and each hour, like each wave, threw up its pearl. How dull was the ball in which he did not bound! How dim the banquet in which he did not glitter! His presence in the Gardens compensated for the want of flowers,—his vision in the Park, for the want of sun. In public breakfasts he was more indispensable than pine-apples; in private concerts,

more noticed than an absent singer. How fair was the dame on whom he smiled! How brown was the tradesman on whom he frowned!

Think only of Prime Ministers and Princes, to say nothing of Princesses—nay! think only of managers of operas and French actors, to say nothing of French actresses,—think only of jewellers, milliners, artists, horse-dealers, all the shoals who hurried for his sanction,—think only of the two or three thousand civilized beings for whom all this population breathed, and who each of them had claims upon our hero's notice! Think of the statesmen, who had so much to ask and so much to give,—the dandies to feed with, and to be fed,—the dangerous dowagers, and the desperate mothers,—the widows, wild as early partridges,—the budding virgins, mild as a summer cloud and soft as an opera hat! Think of the drony bores with their dull hum,—think of the chivalric guardsmen, with their horses to sell, and their bills to discount,—think of Willis, think of Crockford,

think of White's, think of Brookes'——and you may form a very faint idea how the young Duke had to talk, and eat, and flirt, and cut, and pet, and patronize!

You think it impossible for one man to do all this. My friend! there is yet much behind. You may add to the catalogue, Melton and Newmarket; and if to hunt without an appetite, and to bet without an object, will not sicken you, why——build a yacht!

The Duke of St. James gave his first grand entertainment for the season. It was like the assembly of the Immortals at the first levee of Jove. All hurried to pay their devoirs to the young King of Fashion; and each, who succeeded in becoming a member of the Court, felt as proud as a peer with a new title, or a baronet with an old one. An air of regal splendour, an almost imperial assumption was observed in the arrangements of the fête. A troop of servants in new and the richest liveries filled the hall; grooms lined the staircase; Spiridion,

the Greek page, lounged on an Ottoman in an antichamber, and, with the assistance of six young gentlemen in crimson-and-silver uniforms, announced the coming of the cherished guests. Cart-loads of pine-apples were sent up from the Yorkshire Castle, and waggons of orange trees from the Twickenham Villa.

A brilliant *coterie*, of which his Grace was a member, had amused themselves, a few nights before, by representing in costume the Court of Charles the First. They agreed this night to reappear in their splendid dresses; and the Duke, who was Villiers, supported his character, even to the gay shedding of a shower of diamonds. In his cap was observed an hereditary sapphire, which blazed like a volcano, and which was rumoured to be worth his rent-roll.

There was a short concert, at which the most celebrated Signora made her *début ;* there was a single Vaudeville, which a white satin play-bill, presented to each guest as they enter

ed the temporary theatre, indicated to have been written for the occasion; there was a ball in which was introduced a new dance. Nothing for a moment was allowed to lag. *Longueurs* were skilfully avoided, and the excitement was so rapid, that every one had an appetite for supper.

A long gallery lined with bronzes and *bijouterie*, with cabinets and sculpture, with china and with paintings, — all purchased for the future ornament of Hauteville House, and here stowed away in unpretending, but most artificial, confusion, offered accommodation to all the guests. To a table covered with gold, and placed in a magnificent tent upon the stage, his Grace loyally led two princes of the blood, and a child of France, and gave a gallant signal for the commencement of operations, by himself offering them, on his bended knee, a goblet of tokay. Madame de Protocoli, Lady Aphrodite Grafton, the Duchess of Shropshire, and Lady Fitz-pompey, shared

the honours of the pavilion, and some might be excused for envying a party so brilliant, and a situation so distinguished. Yet Lady Aphrodite was an unwilling member of it; and nothing, but the personal solicitation of Sir Lucius, would have induced her to consent to the wish of their host.

A pink and printed *carte* succeeded to the white and satin play-bill. Vitellius might have been pleased with the, banquet. Ah! how shall I describe those soups, which surely must have been the magical elixir? How shall I paint those ortolans dressed, by the inimitable artist, *à la* St. James, for the occasion, and which look so beautiful in death, that they must surely have preferred such an euthanasia, even to flying in the perfumed air of an Ausonian Heaven!

Sweet bird! though thou hast lost thy plumage, thou shalt fly to my mistress! Is it not better to be nibbled by her, than mumbled by a cardinal? I too will feed on thy delicate

beauty. Sweet bird! thy companion has fled to my mistress; and now thou shalt thrill the nerves of her master! Oh! doff, then, thy waistcoat of vine-leaves, pretty rover! and show me that bosom more delicious even than woman's! What gushes of rapture! What a flavour! How peculiar! Even how sacred! Heaven at once sends both manna and quails. Another little wanderer! Pray follow my example! Allow me. All Paradise opens! Let me die eating ortolans to the sound of soft music! The flavour is really too intensely exquisite. Give me a teaspoonful of Maraschino!

Even the supper was brief, though brilliant; and again the cotillon and the quadrille, the waltz, and the galoppe! At no moment of his life had the young Duke felt existence so intense. Wherever he turned his eye, he found a responding glance of beauty and admiration; wherever he turned his ear, the whispered tones were soft and sweet as summer

winds. Each look was an offering, each word was adoration! His soul dilated, the glory of the scene touched all his passions. He almost determined not again to mingle in society; but, like a monarch, merely to receive the world which worshipped him. The idea was sublime: was it even to him impracticable? In the midst of his splendour, he fell into a reverie, and mused on his magnificence. He could no longer resist the conviction, that he was a superior essence, even to all around him. The world seemed created solely for his enjoyment. Nor man nor woman could withstand him. From this hour he delivered himself up to a sublime selfishness. With all his passions and all his profusion, a callousness crept over his heart. His sympathy for those he believed his inferiors and his vassals, was slight. Where we do not respect, we soon cease to love — when we cease to love, virtue weeps and flies. His soul wandered in dreams of omnipotence.

This picture perhaps excites your dislike—it may be, your hatred — perchance, your contempt. Pause! Pity him! Pity his fatal youth!

CHAPTER XI.

The Lady Aphrodite at first refused to sit in the Duke's pavilion. Was she, then, in the *habit* of refusing? Let us not forget our Venus of the Waters. Shall I whisper to you where St. James first dared to hope? No, you shall guess. *Je vous le donne en trois.* The Gardens?—The Opera?—The tea-room?—No! no! no! You are conceiving a locality much more romantic. Already you have created the bower of a Parisina, where the waterfall is even more musical than the birds, more lulling than the evening winds; where all is pale, except the stars; all hushed, except their beating pulses! Will this do? No! What think you then of a Bazaar?

Oh! thou wonderful nineteenth century,—thou that believest in no miracles, and doest so many, hast thou brought this, too, about, that ladies' hearts should be won—and gentlemen's also—not in courts of tourney, or halls of revel, but over a counter, and behind a stall! We are, indeed, a nation of shopkeepers!

The King of Otaheite,—Mr. Peel and the State-paper Office must be thanked for this narrative,—though a despot, was a reformer. He discovered that the eating of bread-fruit was a barbarous custom, which would infallibly prevent his people from being a great nation. He determined to introduce French rolls. A party rebelled; the despot was energetic; some were executed; the rest ejected. The vagabonds arrived in England. As they had been banished in opposition to French rolls, they were declared to be a British interest. They professed their admiration of civil and religious liberty, and also of a subscription. When

they had drunk a great deal of punch, and spent all their money, they discovered that they had nothing to eat, and would infallibly have been starved, had not an Hibernian Marchioness, who had never been in Ireland, been exceedingly shocked that men should die of hunger,—and so, being one of the bustlers, she got up a fancy sale, and a SANDWICH ISLE BAZAAR.

All the world was there, and of course our hero. Never was the arrival of a comet watched by astronomers who had calculated its advent, with more anxiety than was the appearance of the young Duke. Never did man pass through such dangers. It was the fiery ordeal! St. Anthony himself was not assailed by more temptations. Now he was saved from the lustre of a blonde face by the superior richness of a blonde lace. He would infallibly have been ravished by that ringlet, had he not been nearly reduced by that ring, which sparkled on a hand like the white cat's. He was only pre-

served from his unprecedented dangers by their number. No, no! He had a better talisman: —his conceit.

"Ah, Lady Balmont!" said his Grace to a smiling artist, who offered him one of her own drawings of a Swiss cottage, "for me to be a tenant, it must be love and a cottage!"

"What! am I to buy this ring, Mrs. Abercroft! *Point de jour.* Oh! dreadful phrase! Allow me to present it to you, for you are the only one whom such words cannot make tremble."

"This chain, Lady Jemima, for my glass. It will teach me where to direct it."

"Ah! Mrs. Fitzroy!"—and he covered his face with affected fear.—"Can you forgive me? Your beautiful note has been half an hour unanswered. The box is yours for Tuesday."

He tried to pass the next stall with a smiling bow, but he could not escape. It was Lady de Courcy, a dowager, but not old. Once beautiful, her charms had not yet disappeared.

She had a pair of glittering eyes, a skilfully carmined cheek, and locks yet raven. Her eloquence made her now as conspicuous as once did her beauty. The young Duke was her constant object, and her occasional victim. He hated, above all things, a talking woman; he dreaded, above all others, Lady de Courcy.

He could not shirk. She summoned him by name so loud, that crowds of barbarians stared, and a man called to a woman, and said, "My dear! make haste, here's a Duke!"

Lady de Courcy was prime confidant of the Irish Marchioness. She affected enthusiasm about the poor sufferers. She had learnt Otaheitan--she lectured about the bread-fruit—and she played upon a barbarous thrum-thrum, the only musical instrument in those savage wastes, ironically called the Society Islands, because there is no society. She was dreadful. The Duke in despair took out his purse, poured forth from the pink and silver delicacy, worked by the slender fingers of Lady Aphrodite, a

shower of sovereigns, and fairly scampered off.—At length he reached the lady of his heart.

"I fear," said the young Duke with a smile, and in a soft sweet voice, "that you will never speak to me again, for I am a ruined man."

A beam of gentle affection reprimanded him even for badinage on such a subject.

"I really came here to buy up all your stock; but that gorgon, Lady de Courcy, captured me, and my ransom has sent me here free, but a beggar. I do not know a more ill-fated fellow than myself. Now, if you had only condescended to take me prisoner, I might have saved my money; for I should have kissed my chain."

"My chains, I fear, are neither very alluring, nor very strong." She spoke with a thoughtful air, and he answered her only with his eye.

"I must bear off something from your stall;" he resumed in a more rapid and gayer

tone, "and as I cannot purchase, you must present.—Now for a gift!"

"Choose!"

"Yourself."

"Your Grace is really spoiling my sale. See! poor Lord Bagshot. What a valuable purchaser!"

"Ah! Bag, my boy!" said the Duke to a slang young nobleman whom he abhorred, but of whom he sometimes made a butt,—"am I in your way? Here! take this, and this, and this, and give me your purse. I'll pay her Ladyship." And so the Duke again showered some sovereigns, and returned the shrunken silk to its defrauded owner, who stared, and would have remonstrated, but his Grace turned his back upon him.

"There now," he continued to Lady Aphrodite, "there is two hundred per cent. profit for you. You are not half a *marchande.* I will stand here, and be your shopman.—Well, Annesley," said he, as that dignitary passed,

"what will you buy of my mistress? I advise you to get a place. 'Pon my soul, 'tis pleasant! Try Lady de Courcy. You know you are a favourite."

"I assure your Grace," said Mr. Annesley, speaking very slowly, "that that story about Lady de Courcy is quite untrue, and very rude. I never turn my back on any woman, only my heel. We are on the best possible terms. — She is never to speak to me, and I am always to bow to her.—But I really must purchase.—Where did you get that glass-chain, St. James? Lady Afy, can you accommodate me?"

"Here is one prettier! But are you near-sighted too, Mr. Annesley?"

"Very. I look upon a long-sighted man as a brute who, not being able to see with his mind, is obliged to see with his body.—The price of this?"

"A sovereign," said the Duke—"cheap; but we consider you as a friend."

"A sovereign! You consider me a young Duke rather.—Two shillings, and that a severe price—a charitable price.—Here is half-a-crown—give me sixpence. I was not a minor.—Farewell! I go to the little Pomfret. She is a sweet flower, and I intend to wear her in my button-hole.—Good bye, Lady Afy!"

The gay morning had worn away, and St. James never left his fascinating position.—Many a sweet, and many a soft thing he uttered. Sometimes he was baffled, but never beaten, and always returned to the charge with spirit. He was confident, because he was reckless: the lady had less trust in herself, because she was anxious. Yet she combated well, and repressed the passion which she could hardly conceal.

Many of her colleagues had already departed. She requested the Duke to look after her carriage.—A bold plan suddenly occurred to him, and he executed it with rare courage, and rarer felicity.

"Lady Aphrodite Grafton's carriage!"

"Here, your Grace!"

"Oh! go home. Your Lady will return with Madame de Protocoli."

He rejoined her.

"I am sorry that, by some blunder, your carriage has gone.—What could you have told them?"

"Impossible! How provoking! How stupid!"

"Perhaps you told them that you would return with the Fitz-pompeys, but they are gone; or, Mrs. Aberleigh, and she is not here; —or perhaps,——but they have gone too.— Every one has gone."

"What shall I do? How distressing! I had better send. Pray, send; or I will ask Lady de Courcy."

"Oh! no, no! I really did not like to see you with her. As a favour — as a favour to me, I pray you not."

"What can I do? I must send. Let me beg your Grace to send."

"Certainly, certainly; but, ten to one, there

will be some mistake. There always is some mistake when you send these strangers. And, besides, I forgot, all this time, my carriage is here. Let me take you home."

"No, no!"

"Dearest Lady Aphrodite, do not distress yourself. I can wait here till the carriage returns, or I can walk; to be sure, I can walk. Pray, pray take the carriage! As a favour—as a favour to me!"

"But I cannot bear you to walk. I know you dislike walking."

"Well, then, I will wait."

"Well, if it must be so—but I am ashamed to inconvenience you. How provoking of these men! Pray, then, tell the coachman to drive fast, that you may not have to wait. I declare, there is scarcely a human being in the room; and those odd people are staring so!"

He pressed her arm, as he led her to his carriage. She is in; and yet, before the door shuts, he lingers.

"I shall certainly walk," said he. "I do not think the easterly wind will make me very ill. Good bye! Oh, what a *coup de vent!*"

"Let me get out, then; and pray, pray take the carriage. I would much sooner do any thing than go in it. I would much rather walk. I am sure you will be ill!"

"Not if I be with *you!*" He pressed her hand with impassioned warmth — he spoke to her in a voice soft with adoration. Their eloquent eyes met — and he leapt in.

"Drive home!" said the young Duke

Oh! moment of triumph!

CHAPTER XII.

THERE was a brilliant levee,—all stars and garters; and a splendid drawing-room, — all plumes and *seduisantes*. Many a bright eye, as its owner fought its way down St. James's Street, shot a wistful glance at the enchanted bow-window, where the Duke and his usual companions, Sir Lucius, Charles Annesley, and Lord Squib, lounged and laughed, stretched themselves, and sneered: many a bright eye, that for a moment pierced the futurity, that painted her going in state as Duchess of St. James.

His Majesty summoned a dinner party, a rare but magnificent event,—and the chief of the

house of Hauteville appeared among the chosen vassals. This visit did the young Duke good; and a few more might have permanently cured the conceit, which the present one momentarily calmed. His Grace saw the plate, and was filled with envy; his Grace listened to his Majesty, and was filled with admiration. Oh! father of thy people! if thou would'st but look a little oftener on thy younger sons, their morals and their manners might be alike improved. Oh! George the magnificent, and the great!—for hast thou not rivalled the splendour of Lorenzo, and the grandeur of Louis?—Smile on the praises of one who is loyal, although not a Poet Laureate, and who is sincere, though he sips no sack.

His Majesty, in the course of the evening, with his usual good-nature, signalled out for his notice the youngest, and not the least distinguished, of his guests. He complimented the young Duke on the accession to the ornaments of his court, and said, with a smile,

that he had heard of conquests in foreign ones. The Duke accounted for his slight successes by reminding his Majesty, that he had the honour of being his godson,—and this he said in a slight and easy way, not smart or quick, or as a repartee to the royal observation—for "it is not decorous to bandy compliments with your Sovereign." His Majesty asked some questions about an Emperor, or an Archduchess, and his Grace answered to the purpose, but short, and not too pointed. He listened rather than spoke, and smiled more assent than he uttered. The King was pleased with his young subject, and marked his approbation by conversing with that unrivalled affability, which is gall to a Roundhead, and inspiration to a Cavalier. There was a *bon mot*, which blazed with all the soft brilliancy of sheet lightning. What a contrast to the forky flashes of irregular wit! Then there was an anecdote of Sheridan—the royal Sheridaniana are not thrice told tales—recounted with that curious felicity,

which has long stamped the illustrious narrator as the most consummate *raconteur* (1) in Europe. Then—but the Duke knew when to withdraw; and he withdrew with renewed loyalty.

When I call to mind the unlimited indulgence, which solicits, from the earliest age, the passions of a King, I pardon their crimes, and I reverence their virtues. But if I view a Sovereign, who, with all those advantages, which can seduce others and himself, commits in a brilliant youth, at the worst, but a brilliant folly; if I view the same individual on the throne, exercising all those powers, which adorn the entrusted chieftain of a free people, with the calm wisdom which belongs only to that man who dares to ponder on a past error—of such a monarch, I am proud, and such a monarch I call a true philosopher.

Oh! people of England, be contented! You know not what might have been your lot. I might have been your King: and, although

you have already conceived me, as the very prosopopœia of amiability, the dreaded, the stern, the mortifying truth must no longer be concealed,—I should have been a tyrant!

But what a tyrant! I would have smothered you in roses, shot you with bon-bons, and drowned you in Eau-de-Cologne. I would have banged up your parliaments, knocked up your steam-engines, shut up all societies for the diffusion of any thing. I would have republished the 'Book of Sports, restored holidays, revived the Drama. Every parish should have had its orchestra, every village its dancing-master. I would have built fountains, and have burnt fireworks.

But I am not a King. Bitter recollection! Yet something may turn up. Greece, for instance. In the mean time, I will take a canter

CHAPTER XIII.

THE Duke of St. James had been extremely desirous of inducing the fair Aphrodite to accept some *gage d'amour*, but had failed in all his plans, which annoyed him.

One day, looking in at his jeweller's, to see some models of a shield and vases, which were executing for him in gold—ever since he dined with his Majesty, that unhappy sideboard of plate had haunted him at all hours—he met Lady Aphrodite and the Fitz-pompeys. Lady Aphrodite was speaking to the jeweller about her diamonds, which were to be reset, or something, for her approaching fête. The Duke took the ladies up-stairs to look at the models,

and while they were intent upon them and other curiosities, his absence for a moment was unperceived. He ran down-stairs and caught Mr. Garnet.

"Mr. Garnet! I think, I saw Lady Aphrodite give you her diamonds?"

"Yes, your Grace."

"Are they valuable?" in a careless tone.

"Hum! very pretty stones,—very pretty stones indeed. Few Baronets' ladies have a prettier set,—worth perhaps a 1000*l.*—say 1200*l.*—Lady Aphrodite Grafton is not the Duchess of St. James, you know," said Mr. Garnet, as if he anticipated furnishing that future lady with a very different set of brilliants.

"Mr. Garnet, you can do me the greatest favour."

"Your Grace has only to command me at all times."

"Well then, in a word, for time presses. Can you contrive, without particularly altering, that is, without altering the general appearance

of these diamonds,—can you contrive to change the stones, and substitute the most valuable that you have—consistent, as I must impress upon you, with maintaining their general appearance, as at present?"

"The most valuable stones," musingly repeated Mr. Garnet,—"general appearance, as at present? We cannot deceive her Ladyship."

"If that be absolutely impossible, then we must give that point up; but generally, generally can you preserve their present character?"

"The most valuable stones!" repeated Mr. Garnet; "your Grace is aware, that we may run up some thousands even in this set?"

"I give you no limit."

"But the time," rejoined Mr. Garnet. "They must be ready for her Ladyship's party. We shall be hard pressed. I am afraid of the time."

"Cannot the men work all night? Pay them any thing."

" It shall be done, your Grace. Your Grace may command me in any thing."

" This is a secret between us, Garnet. Your partners—"

" Shall know nothing. And as for myself, I am as close as an emerald in a seal-ring."

CHAPTER XIV.

HUSSEIN Pacha, "the favourite" not only of the Marquess of Mash, but of Tattersall's, unaccountably sickened, and died. His noble master, full of chagrin, took to his bed, and followed his steed's example. The death of the Marquess caused a vacancy in the stewardship of the approaching Doncaster. Sir Lucius Grafton was the other steward, and he proposed to the Duke of St. James, as he was a Yorkshireman, to become his colleague. His Grace, who wished to pay a compliment to his county, closed with the proposition. Sir Lucius was a first-rate jockey; his colleague was quite ignorant of the noble science in all its details,

but that was of slight importance. The Baronet was to be the working partner, and do the business,—the Duke, the show member of the concern, and do the magnificence: as one banker, you may observe, lives always in Portland Place, reads the Court Journal all the morning, and has an Opera-box, while his partner lodges in Lombard Street, thumbs a Price-Current, and only has a box at Clapham.

The Young Duke, however, was ambitious of making a good book; and, with all the calm impetuosity which characterises a youthful Hauteville, determined to have a crack stud at once. So at Ascot, where he spent a few pleasant hours, dined at the Cottage, was caught in a shower, in return caught a cold, a slight influenza for a week, and all the world full of inquiries and anxiety,—at Ascot, I say, he bought up all the winning horses at an average of three thousand guineas for each pair of ears. Sir Lucius stared, remonstrated,

and, as his remonstrances were in vain, assisted him.

As people on the point of death often make a desperate rally, so this, the most brilliant of seasons, was even more lively as it nearer approached its end. The *déjeuner* and the villa *fête*, the water party and the rambling ride, followed each other with the bright rapidity of the final scenes in a Pantomime. Each *dama* seemed only inspired with the ambition of giving the last ball; and so numerous were the parties, that the town really sometimes seemed illuminated. To breakfast at Twickenham, and to dine in Belgrave Square; to hear, or rather to honour, half an act of an opera; to campaign through half a dozen private balls, and to finish with a romp at the rooms, as after our wine we take a glass of liqueur—all this surely required the courage of an Alexander, and the strength of a Hercules, and which, indeed, cannot be achieved without the miraculous powers of a Joshua. So thought the young Duke, as with

an excited mind and a whirling head, he threw himself actually at half-past six o'clock on a couch which brought him no sleep.

Yet he recovered, and with the aid of the bath, the soda, and the coffee, and all the thousand remedies which a skilful valet has ever at hand, at three o'clock on the same day he rose and dressed, and in an hour was again at the illustrious bow-window, sneering with Charles Annesley, or laughing downright with Lord Squib.

The Duke of St. James gave a water party, and the astounded Thames swelled with pride, as his broad breast bore on the ducal barges. St. Maurice, who was in the Guards, secured his band; and Lord Squib, who, though it was July, brought a furred great coat, secured himself. Lady Afy looked like Amphitrite, and Lady Caroline looked—in love. They wandered in gardens like Calypso's; they rambled over a villa, which reminded them of Baiæ; they partook of a banquet which should have

been described by Ariosto. All were delighted: they delivered themselves to the charms of an unrestrained gaiety. Even Charles Annesley, laughed and romped.

This is, I think, the only mode in which public eating is essentially agreeable. A banqueting-hall is often the scene of exquisite pleasure; but that is not so much excited by the gratification of a delicate palate, as by the magnificent effect of light and shade—by the beautiful women, the radiant jewels, the graceful costume, the rainbow glass, the glowing wines, the glorious plate. For the rest, all is too hot, too crowded, and too noisy, to catch a flavour—to analyze a combination—to dwell upon a gust. To eat—*really*, to eat, one must eat alone, with a soft light with simple furniture, an easy dress, and a single dish—at a time. Oh, hours that I have thus spent! Oh, hours of bliss! Oh, hours of virtue!—for what is more virtuous than to be conscious of the blessings of a bountiful Nature! A good

eater must be a good man; for a good eater must have a good digestion, and a good digestion depends upon a good conscience. After having committed many follies, and tasted many dishes, but never with the intention of doing a bad action, or eating a bad *plat*, I give to the World this result of all philosophy, and present them with a great Truth.

But to our tale. If I be dull,—skip: time will fly, and beauty will fade, and wit grow dull, and even the season, although it seems, for the nonce, like the existence of Olympus, will, nevertheless, steal away. It is the hour when trade grows dull, and tradesmen grow duller:—it is the hour that Howell loveth not, and Stultz cannot abide; though the first may be consoled by the ghosts of his departed millions of *mouchoirs*—and the second, by the vision of coming millions of shooting jackets. Oh, why that sigh, my gloomy Mr. Gunter! Oh, why that frown, my gentle Mrs. Grange!

One by one, the great houses shut:—shoal by shoal, the little people sail away. Yet beauty lingers still. Still the magnet of a straggling ball attracts the remaining brilliants; still, a lagging dinner, like a sumpter-mule on a march, is a mark for plunder. The Park, too, is not yet empty, and perhaps is even more fascinating — like a beauty in a consumption, who each day gets thinner and more fair. The young Duke remained to the last — for we linger about our first season, as we do about our first mistress, rather wearied, yet full of delightful reminiscences.

END OF THE FIRST BOOK.

THE YOUNG DUKE.



BOOK THE SECOND.

THE YOUNG DUKE.

BOOK THE SECOND.

CHAP. I.

LADY APHRODITE and the Duke of St. James were for the first time parted; and with an absolute belief on the lady's side, and an avowed conviction on the gentleman's, that it was impossible to live asunder, they broke from each other's arms, her Ladyship shedding some temporary tears, and his Grace avowing eternal fidelity.

It was the crafty Lord Fitz-pompey, who brought about this catastrophe. Having secured his nephew as a visitor to Malthorpe,

by allowing him to believe that the Graftons would form part of the summer coterie, his Lordship took especial care that poor Lady Aphrodite should not be invited. "Once part them, once get him to Malthorpe alone," mused the experienced Peer, "and he will be emancipated. I am doing him, too, the greatest kindness. What would I have given, when a young man, to have had such an uncle!"

The Morning Post announced with a sigh the departure of the Duke of St. James to the splendid festivities of Malthorpe; and also apprised the world that Sir Lucius and Lady Aphrodite were entertaining a numerous and distinguished party at their seat, Cleve Park, Cambridgeshire.

There was a constant bustle kept up at Malthorpe, and the young Duke was hourly permitted to observe, that, independent of all private feeling, it was impossible for the most distinguished nobleman to ally himself with a more considered family. There was a con-

tinual swell of guests, dashing down, and dashing away like the ocean—brilliant as its foam, numerous as its waves. But there was one permanent inhabitant of this princely mansion far more interesting to our hero, than the evanescent crowds who rose like bubbles, glittered, broke, and disappeared.

Once more wandering in that park of Malthorpe, where had passed the most innocent days of his boyhood, his thoughts naturally recurred to the sweet companion who had made even those hours of happiness more felicitous. Here they had rambled,—here they had first tried their ponies,—there they had nearly fallen,—there he had quite saved her,—here were the two very elms where St. Maurice made for them a swing,—here was the very keeper's cottage of which she had made for him a drawing, and which he still retained. Dear girl! And had she disappointed the romance of his boyhood,—had the experience the want of which had allowed him then to be pleased so easily,

had it taught him to be ashamed of those days of affection? Was she not now the most gentle, the most graceful, the most beautiful, the most kind? Was she not the most wife-like woman whose eyes had ever beamed with tenderness? Why, why not at once close a career which, though short, yet already could yield reminiscences which might satisfy the most craving admirer of excitement? But there was Lady Aphrodite; yet that must end. Alas! on his part, it had commenced in levity; he feared, on hers, it must terminate in anguish. Yet, though he loved Caroline,—though he could not recall to his memory the woman who was more worthy of being his wife, he could not also conceal from himself, that the feelings which impelled him were hardly so romantic as he thought should have inspired a youth of one-and-twenty, when he mused on the woman he loved best. But he knew life, and he felt convinced, that a mistress and a wife must always be different characters. A combination of passion with present

respect, and permanent affection, he supposed to be the delusion of romance writers. He thought he must marry Caroline, partly because he must marry sooner or later; partly because he had never met a woman whom he had loved so much, and partly because he felt he should be miserable, if her destiny in life were not, in some way or other, connected with his own. "Ah! if she had but been my sister!"

After a little more cogitation, the young Duke felt very much inclined to make his cousin a Duchess; but time did not press. After Doncaster, he must spend a few weeks at Cleve, and then he determined to come to an explanation with Lady Aphrodite. In the mean time, Lord Fitz-pompey secretly congratulated himself on his skilful policy, as he perceived his nephew daily more engrossed with his daughter. Lady Caroline, like all unaffected and accomplished women, was seen to great effect in the country. There, while they feed their birds, tend their flowers, and tune their harp,

and perform those more sacred, but not less pleasing, duties which become the daughter of a great proprietor, they favourably contrast with those more modish damsels, who, the moment they are freed from the Park, and from Willis, begin fighting for silver arrows, and patronizing county balls.

September came, and brought some relief to those who were suffering in the inferno of provincial *ennui*; but this is only the purgatory to the Paradise of Battus. Yet September has its days of slaughter; and the young Duke gained some laurels, with the aid of friend Egg, friend Purdy, and Manton. And the Premier galloped down sixty miles in one morning. He sacked his cover, made a light bet with St. James on the favourite, lunched standing, and was off before night; for he had only three days' holiday, and had to visit Lord Protest, Lord Content, and Lord Proxy. So, having knocked off four of his crack peers, he galloped back to London to flog up his secretaries.

And the young Duke was off too. He had promised to spend a week with Charles Annesley and Lord Squib, who had taken some Norfolk Baronet's seat for the summer, and while he was at Spa, were thinning his preserves. It *was* a week! What fantastic dissipation! One day, the brains of three hundred hares made a *paté* for Charles Annesley. Oh, Heliogabalus! you gained eternal fame, for what is now "done in a corner!"

CHAPTER II.

THE Carnival of the North at length arrived. All civilized eyes were on the most distinguished party of the most distinguished steward, who with his horse, Sansparcil, seemed to share universal favour. The French Princes, and the Duke of Burlington; the Protocolis, and the Fitz-pompeys, and the Bloomerlys; the Duke and Duchess of Shropshire, and the three Ladies Wrekin, who might have passed for the Graces; Lord and Lady Vatican on a visit from Rome, his Lordship taking hints for a heat in the Corso, and her Ladyship, a classical beauty with a face like a Cameo; St. Maurice, and Annesley, and Squib, composed the party.

The Premier was expected, and there was murmur of an Archduke. Seven houses had been prepared,—a party-wall knocked down to make a dining-room,—the plate sent down from London, and venison and wine from Hauteville.

The assemblage exceeded in quantity and quality all preceding years, and the Hauteville arms, the Hauteville liveries, and the Hauteville outriders, beat all hollow in blazonry, and brilliancy, and number. The North countrymen were proud of their young Duke and his six carriages and six, and longed for the Castle to be finished. Nothing could exceed the propriety of the arrangements, for Sir Lucius was an unrivalled hand, and though a Newmarket man, gained universal approbation even in Yorkshire. Lady Aphrodite was all smiles and new liveries, and the Duke of St. James reined in his charger right often at her splendid equipage.

The day's sport was over, and the evening's

sport begun,—to a quiet man, who has no bet more heavy than a dozen pair of gloves, perhaps not the least amusing. Now came the numerous dinner-parties, none to be compared to that of the Duke of St. James. Lady Aphrodite was alone wanting, but she had to head the *ménage* of Sir Lucius. Every one has an appetite after a race: the Duke of Shropshire attacked the venison, like Samson the Philistines; and the French princes, for once in their life, drank real Champaigne.

Yet all faces were not so serene as those of the party of Hauteville. Many a one felt that strange mixture of fear and exultation, which precedes a battle. To-morrow was the dreaded St. Ledger. None indeed had backed his horse with more fervour than the young Duke; but, proud in his steed's blood and favour, his own sanguine temper, and his inexhaustible resources, he cared no more for the result, than a candidate for a county, who has a borough in reserve.

'Tis night, and the banquet is over, and all are hastening to the ball.

In spite of the brilliant crowd, the entrance of the Hauteville party made a sensation. It was the crowning ornament to the scene,—the stamp of the sovereign,—the lamp of the Pharos,—the flag of the tower. The party dispersed, and the Duke, after joining a quadrille with Lady Caroline, wandered away to make himself generally popular.

As he was moving along, he turned his head; —he started.

"Gracious heavens!" exclaimed his Grace.

The cause of this sudden and ungovernable exclamation can be no other than a woman.— You are right. The lady who had excited it was advancing in a quadrille, some ten yards from her admirer. She was very young, that is to say, she had, perhaps, added a year or two to sweet seventeen, an addition which, while it does not deprive the sex of the early grace of girlhood, adorns them with that indefinable

dignity, which is necessary to constitute a perfect woman. She was not tall, but as she moved forward, displayed a figure so exquisitely symmetrical, that, for a moment, the Duke forgot to look at her face, and then her head was turned away; yet he was consoled a moment for his disappointment by watching the movements of a neck so white, and round, and long, and delicate, that it would have become Psyche, and might have inspired Praxiteles. Her face is again turning towards him. It stops too soon, yet his eye feeds upon the outline of a cheek not too full, yet promising of beauty, like Hope of Paradise.

She turns her head, she throws around a glance, and two streams of liquid light pour from her hazel eyes on his. It was a rapid, graceful movement, unstudied as the motion of a fawn, and was in a moment withdrawn, yet was it long enough to stamp upon his memory a memorable countenance. Her face was quite oval, her nose delicately aquiline, and her high pure forehead like a Pa-

rian dome. The clear blood coursed under her transparent cheek, and increased the brilliancy of her dazzling eyes. His eye never left her. There was an expression of decision about her small mouth — an air of almost mockery in her thin curling lip, which, though in themselves wildly fascinating, strangely contrasted with all the beaming light and beneficent lustre of the upper part of her countenance. There was something, too, in the graceful but rather decided air with which she moved — something even in the way in which she shook her handkerchief, or nodded to a distant friend, which seemed to betoken her self-consciousness of her beauty or her rank: perhaps it might be her wit; for the Duke observed, that while she scarcely smiled, and conversed with lips hardly parted, her companion, with whom she was evidently very intimate, was almost constantly convulsed with laughter, although, as he never spoke, it was clearly not at his own jokes.

Was she married? Could it be? Impos-

sible! Yet there was a richness — a regality in her costume, which was not usual for unmarried women. A diamond arrow had pierced her clustering and auburn locks; she wore, indeed, no necklace—(with such a neck, it would have been sacrilege) — no earrings, for her ears were, literally, too small for such a burthen; yet her girdle was entirely of brilliants; and a diamond cross, worthy of Belinda and her immortal bard, hung upon her breast.

The Duke seized hold of the first person he knew: — it was Lord Bagshot.

"Tell me," he said, in the stern, low voice of a despot—"tell me who that creature is?"

"Which creature?" asked Lord Bagshot.

"Booby! brute! Bag,—that creature of light and love!"

"Where?"

"There!"

"What, my mother?"

"Your mother! cub! cart-horse! answer me, or I will run you through."

"Who do you mean?"

"There, there, dancing with that raw-boned youth with red hair."

"What, Lord St. Jerome! Lord! he is a Catholic. I never speak to them. My governor would be so savage."

"But the girl, the girl!"

"Oh! the girl! Lord! she is a Catholic too."

"But who is she?"

"Lord! don't you know?"

"Speak, hound—speak!"

"Lord! that is the beauty of the county; but then she is a Catholic. How shocking! Blow us all up, as soon as look at us."

"If you do not tell me who she is directly, you shall never get into White's. I will black-ball you regularly."

"Lord! man, don't be in a passion. I will tell. But then I know, you know all the time You are joking. Everybody knows the beauty of the county—every body knows May Dacre."

"May Dacre!" said the Duke of St. James, as if he were shot.

"Why, what is the matter now?" asked Lord Bagshot.

"What, the daughter of Dacre of Castle Dacre?" pursued his Grace.

"The very same; the beauty of the county. Every body knows May Dacre. I knew, you knew her all the time. You did not take me in. Why, what is the matter?"

"Nothing; get away!"

"Civil! But you will remember your promise about White's?"

"Ay! ay! I shall remember you, when you are proposed."

"Here—here is a business!" soliloquized the young Duke. "May Dacre! What a fool I have been! Shall I shoot myself through the head, or embrace her on the spot? Lord St. Jerome too! He seems mightily pleased. And my family have been voting for two centuries to emancipate this fellow! Curse his grinning

face! I am decidedly anti-Catholic. But then she is a Catholic! I will turn Papist. Ah! there is Lucy. I want a counsellor."

He turned to his fellow steward—"Oh! Lucy, such a woman! such an incident!"

"What! the inimitable Miss Dacre, I suppose—Every body speaking of her—wherever I go, one subject of conversation. Burlington wanting to waltz with her, Charles Annesly being introduced, and Lady Bloomerly decidedly of opinion, that she is the finest creature in the county. Well! have you danced with her?"

"Danced, my dear fellow! Do not speak to me."

"What is the matter?"

"The most diabolical matter that you ever heard of."

"Well, well?"

"I have not even been introduced."

"Well! come on at once."

"I cannot."

"Are you mad?"

"Worse than mad. Where is her father?"

"Who cares?"

"I do. In a word, my dear Lucy, her father is that guardian, whom I have perhaps mentioned to you, and to whom I have behaved so delicately."

"Why! I thought your guardian was an old curmudgeon."

"What does that signify, with such a daughter!"

"Oh! here is some mistake. This is the only child of Dacre, of Castle Dacre, a most delightful fellow.—One of the first fellows in the county—I was introduced to him to-day on the course.—I thought you knew them.—You were admiring his outriders to-day—the green and silver."

"Why, Bag told me they were old Lord Sunderland's."

"Bag! How can you believe a word of that booby?—He always has an answer. To-day, when Amy drove in, I asked Bag who she was,

and he said it was his aunt, Lady de Courcy. I begged to be introduced, and took over the blushing Bag and presented him."

"But the father—the father, Lucy!—how shall I get out of this scrape?"

"Oh! put on a bold face. Here! give him this ring, and swear you procured it for him at Genoa, and then say, that now you are here, you will try his pheasants."

"My dear fellow, you always joke. I am in agony. Seriously, what shall I do?"

"Why, seriously, be introduced to him, and do what you can."

"Which is he?"

"At the extreme end, next to the very pretty woman, who, by the by, I recommend to your notice,—Mrs. Dallington Vere. She is very amusing. I know her well. She is some sort of relation to your Dacres. I will present you to both at once."

"Why! I will think of it."

"Well, then! I must away. The two

stewards knocking their heads together is rather out of character. Do you know, it is raining hard? I am cursedly nervous about to-morrow."

"Pooh! pooh! If I could get through to-night, I should not care for to-morrow."

CHAPTER III.

As Sir Lucius hurried off, his colleague advanced towards the upper end of the room, and taking up a position, made his observations, through the shooting figures of the dancers, on the dreaded Mr. Dacre.

The late guardian of the Duke of St. James was in the perfection of manhood; perhaps five-and-forty by age; but his youth had lingered long. He was tall, thin, and elegant, with a mild and benevolent expression of countenance, not unmixed, however, with a little reserve, the ghost of youthly pride. Listening with the most polished and courtly bearing to the pretty Mrs. Dallington Vere, assenting occasionally

to her piquant observations by a slight bow, or expressing his dissent by a still slighter smile, seldom himself speaking, yet always with that unembarrassed manner, which makes a saying listened to, Mr. Dacre was altogether, in appearance, one of the most distinguished personages in this distinguished assembly. The young Duke fell into an attitude worthy of Hamlet—"This, then, is *old* Dacre! Oh, deceitful Fitz-pompey! Oh, silly St. James! Could I ever forget that tall, mild man, who now is perfectly fresh in my memory? Ah! that memory of mine—it has been greatly developed to-night. Would that I had cultivated that faculty with a little more zeal! But what am I to do? The case is urgent. What must the Dacres think of me? What must May Dacre think? On the course the whole day, and I, the Steward, and not conscious of the presence of the family in the Riding! Fool, fool! Why—why did I accept an office for which I was totally unfitted? Why—why must I

flirt away a whole morning with that silly Sophy Wrekin? An agreeable predicament, truly, this! What would I give now, once more to be at the bow-window! Confound my Yorkshire estates! How they must dislike—how they must despise me! And now, truly, I am to be *introduced* to him! The Duke of St. James—Mr. Dacre! Mr. Dacre—the Duke of St. James! What an insult to all parties! How supremely ludicrous! What a mode of offering my gratitude to the man to whom I am under the most solemn and inconceivable obligations! A choice way, truly, to salute the bosom-friend of my sire, the guardian of my interests, the creator of my property, the fosterer of my orphan infancy! It is useless to conceal it; I am placed in the most disagreeable, the most inextricable situation.

"Inextricable! Am I, then, the Duke of St. James,—am I that being who, two hours ago, thought that the world was formed alone for my enjoyment, and I quiver and shrink here

like a common hind? Out—out on such craven cowardice! I am no Hauteville! I am bastard! Never! I will not be crushed. I will struggle with this emergency, I will conquer it. Now aid me, ye heroes of my house! On the sands of Palestine, on the plains of France, ye were not in a more difficult situation than is your descendant in a ball-room, in his own county. My mind elevates itself to the occasion,—my courage expands with the enterprise, —I will right myself with these Dacres, with honour, and without humiliation."

The dancing ceased,—the dancers disappeared. There was a blank between the Duke of St. James on one side of the broad room, and Mr. Dacre, and those with whom he was conversing on the other. Many eyes were on his Grace, and he seized the opportunity to execute his purpose. He advanced across the chamber with the air of a young monarch greeting a victorious general. It seemed that, for a moment, his Majesty wished to destroy all differ-

ence of rank between himself and the man that he honoured. So studied, and so inexpressibly graceful were his movements, that the gaze of all around involuntarily fixed upon him. Mrs. Dallington Vere unconsciously refrained from speaking as he approached; and one or two, without actually knowing his purpose, made way. They seemed positively awed by his dignity, and shuffled behind Mr. Dacre, as if he were the only person who was the Duke's match.

"Mr. Dacre," said his Grace in the softest, but in very audible tones; and he extended, at the same time, his hand — "Mr. Dacre, our first meeting should have been neither here, nor thus; but you, who have excused so much, will pardon also this!"

Mr. Dacre, though a calm personage, was surprised by this sudden address. He could not doubt who was the speaker. He had left his ward a mere child. He saw before him the exact and breathing image of the heart-friend

of his ancient days. He forgot all but the memory of a cherished friendship. He was greatly affected; he pressed the offered hand; he advanced; he moved aside. The young Duke followed up his advantage, and, with an air of the greatest affection, placed Mr. Dacre's arm in his own, and then bore off his prize in triumph.

Right skilfully did our hero avail himself of his advantage. He spoke, and he spoke with emotion. There is something inexpressibly captivating in the contrition of a youthful and a generous mind. Mr. Dacre and his late ward soon understood each other—for it was one of those meetings which sentiment makes sweet.

"And now," said his Grace, "I have one more favour to ask, and that is the greatest—I wish to be recalled to the recollection of my oldest friend."

Mr. Dacre led the Duke to his daughter; and the Earl of St. Jerome, who was still laughing at her side, rose.

"The Duke of St. James, May, wishes to renew his acquaintance with you."

She bowed in silence. Lord St. Jerome, who was the great oracle of the Yorkshire School, and who had betted desperately against the favourite, took Mr. Dacre aside to consult him about the rain, and the Duke of St. James dropped into his chair. That tongue, however, which had never failed him, for once was wanting. There was a momentary silence, which the lady would not break; and at last her companion broke it, and not felicitously.

"I think there is nothing more delightful than meeting with old friends."

"Yes! that is the usual sentiment; but I half suspect that it is a commonplace, invented to cover our embarrassment under such circumstances; for, after all, 'an old friend' so situated is a person whom we have not seen for many years, and most probably not cared to see."

"You are indeed severe."

"Oh! no. I think there is nothing more painful than parting with old friends; but when we have parted with them, I am half afraid they are lost."

"Absence, then, with you is fatal?"

"Really, I never did part with any one I greatly loved; but I suppose it is with me as with most persons."

"Yet you have resided abroad, and for many years?"

"Yes; but I was too young then to have many friends; and, in fact, I accompanied perhaps all that I possessed."

"How I regret that it was not in my power to accept your kind invitation to Dacre in the Spring!"

"Oh! My father would have been very glad to see you; but we really are dull kind of people, not at all in your way,—and I really do not think that you lost much amusement."

"What better amusement—what more interesting occupation could I have had than to

visit the place where I passed my earliest and my happiest hours? 'Tis nearly fifteen years since I was at Dacre."

"Except when you visited us at Easter. We regretted our loss."

"Ah! yes! except that," exclaimed the Duke, remembering his Jager's call; "but that goes for nothing. I of course saw very little."

"Yet, I assure you, you made a great impression. So eminent a personage, of course, observes less than he himself is observed. We had a most graphical description of you on our return, and a very accurate one too,—for I recognised your Grace to-night merely from the report of your visit."

The Duke shot a shrewd glance at his companion's face, but it betrayed no indication of badinage, and so, rather puzzled, he thought it best to put up with the parallel between himself and his servant. But Miss Dacre did not quit this agreeable subject with all that promptitude which he fondly anticipated.

"Poor Lord St. Jerome," said she, "who is really the most unaffected person I know, has been complaining most bitterly of his deficiency in the *air noble*. He is mistaken for a groom perpetually; and once, he says, had a douceur presented to him in his character of an ostler. Your Grace must be proud of your advantage over his Lordship. You would have been greatly gratified by the universal panegyric of our household. They, of course, you know, are proud of their young Duke, a real Yorkshire Duke, and they love to dwell upon your truly imposing appearance. As for myself, who am true Yorkshire also, I take the most honest pride in hearing them describe your elegant attitude, leaning back in your britscha, with your feet on the opposite cushions, your hat cocked aside with that air of undefinable grace characteristic of the *Grand Seigneur*, and, which is the last remnant of the feudal system, your reiterated orders to drive over an old woman. You did not even condescend to

speak English, which made them quite—enthusiastic."

"Oh! Miss Dacre,—spare me, spare me!"

"Spare you? I have heard of your Grace's modesty; but this excessive sensibility, under well-earned praise, does indeed surprise me!"

"But, Miss Dacre, you cannot indeed really believe that this vulgar ruffian, this grim scarecrow, this Guy Faux, was — was — myself."

"Not yourself! Really I am a simple personage. I believe in my eyes, and trust to my ears. I am at a loss for your Grace's meaning."

"I mean, then," said his Grace, who had gained time to rally, "that this monster was some impostor, who must have stolen my carriage, picked my pocket, and robbed me of my card, which, next to his reputation, is a man's most delicate possession."

"Then you never called upon us?"

"I blush to confess it—never; but I will call, in future, every day."

"Your Grace's ingenuousness really rivals your modesty."

"Now, after these confessions and compliments, I suggest a waltz."

"No one is waltzing now."

"When the quadrille, then, is finished?"

"Then I am engaged."

"After your engagement?"

"Oh, impossible! That is indeed making a business of pleasure. I have just refused a similar request of your fellow-steward. We damsels shall soon be obliged to carry a book to enrol our engagements as well as our bets, if this system of reversionary dancing be any longer encouraged."

"But you must dance with me!" said the Duke imploringly.

"Oh! you will stumble upon me in the course of the evening, and I shall probably be more fortunate. I suppose you feel nervous about to-morrow?"

"Oh, no! not at all."

"Ah! I forgot. Your Grace's horse is the favourite. Favourites always win."

"Have I a horse?"

"Why, Lord St. Jerome says, he doubts whether it be one."

"Lord St. Jerome seems a vastly amusing personage; and as he is so often taken for an ostler, I have no doubt, is an exceedingly good judge of horseflesh."

Miss Dacre smiled. It was that wild, but rather wicked gleam, which sometimes accompanies the indulgence of a little innocent malice. It seemed to insinuate, "I know you are piqued, and I enjoy it." But here her hand was claimed for the waltz.

The young Duke remained musing.

"There she swims away! By Heavens! unrivalled! And there is Lady Afy and Burlington,—grand too. Yet there is something in this little Dacre which touches my fancy more. What is it? I think it is her impu-

dence. That confounded scrape of Carlstein! I will cashier him to-morrow. Confound his airs! I think I got out of it pretty well. To-night, on the whole, has been a night of triumph; but if I do not waltz with the little Dacre, I will only vote myself an Ovation. But see, here comes Sir Lucius. Well: how fares my brother Consul?"

"I do not like this rain. I have been hedging with Hounslow, having previously set Bag at his worthy sire with a little information. We shall have a perfect swamp, and then it will be strength against speed—the old story. Damn the St. Leger! I am sick of it."

"Pooh! pooh! think of the little Dacre!"

"Think of her, my dear fellow! I think of her too much. I should absolutely have diddled Hounslow, if it had not been for her confounded pretty face flitting about my stupid brain. I saw you speaking to Guardy. You managed that business well."

"Why, as I do all things, I flatter myself, Lucy. Do you know Lord St. Jerome?"

"Verbally. We have exchanged monosyllables,—but he is of the other set."

"He is cursedly familiar with the little Dacre. As the friend of her father, I think I shall interfere. Is there any thing in it, think you?"

"Oh! no,—she is engaged to another."

"Engaged!" said the Duke, absolutely turning pale.

"Do you remember a Dacre at Eton?"

"A Dacre at Eton!" mused the Duke. At another time it would not have been in his power to have recalled the stranger to his memory, but this evening the train of association had been laid, and after struggling a moment with his mind, he had the man. "To be sure, I do: Arundel Dacre—an odd sort of a fellow; but he was my senior."

"Well, that is the man—a nephew of Guardy, and cousin, of course, to La Bellissima. He inherits, you know, all the property. She will not have a sous; but old Dacre, as you call him, has managed pretty well, and Monsieur

Arundel is to compensate for the entail by presenting him with a grandson."

"The deuce!"

"The deuce, indeed! Often have I broken his head. Would that I had to a little more purpose!"

"Let us do it now!"

"He is not here, otherwise—One dislikes a spooney to be successful."

"Where are our friends?"

"Annesley with the Duchess, and Squib with the Duke at *Ecarté*."

"Success attend them both!"

"Amen!"

CHAPTER IV.

To feel that the possessions of an illustrious ancestry are about to slide from out your line for ever; that the numerous tenantry, who look up to you with the confiding eye, that the most liberal *parvenu* cannot attract, will not count you among their lords; that the proud park, filled with the ancient and toppling trees that your fathers planted, will yield neither its glory nor its treasures to your seed, and that the old gallery, whose walls are hung with pictures more cherished than the collections of kings, will not breathe with your long posterity—— all these are feelings very sad and very trying, and are among those daily pangs which moral-

ists have forgotten in their catalogue of miseries, but which do not the less wear out those heart-strings, at which they are so constantly tugging.

This was the situation of Mr. Dacre. The whole of his immense property was entailed, and descended to his nephew, who was a Protestant; and yet when he looked upon the blooming face of his enchanting daughter, he blessed the Providence which, after all his visitations, had doomed him to be the sire of a thing so lovely.

An exile from her country at an early age, the education of May Dacre had been completed in a foreign land; yet the mingling bloods of Dacre and of Howard would not in a moment have permitted her to forget

"The inviolate island of the brave and free!"

even if the unceasing and ever watchful exertions of her father had been wanting to make her worthy of so illustrious an ancestry.

But this, happily, was not the case; and to

aid the developement of the infant mind of his young child; to pour forth to her, as she grew in years and in reason, all the fruits of his own richly cultivated intellect, was the solitary consolation of one, over whose conscious head was impending the most awful of visitations. May Dacre was gifted with a mind which, even if her tutor had not been her father, would have rendered tuition a delight. Her lively imagination, which early unfolded itself; her dangerous yet interesting vivacity; the keen delight, the swift enthusiasm with which she drank in knowledge, and then panted for more; her shrewd acuteness, and her innate passion for the excellent and the beautiful, filled her father with rapture which he repressed, and made him feel conscious how much there was to check, to guide, and to form, as well as to cherish, to admire, and to applaud.

As she grew up, the bright parts of her character shone with increased lustre; but, in spite of the exertions of her instructor, some less ad-

mirable qualities had not yet disappeared. She was still too often the dupe of her imagination, and though perfectly inexperienced, her confidence in her theoretical knowledge of human nature was unbounded. She had an idea, that she could penetrate the characters of individuals at a first meeting; and the consequence of this fatal axiom was, that she was always the slave of first impressions, and constantly the victim of prejudice. She was ever thinking individuals better or worse than they really were; and she believed it to be out of the power of any one to deceive her. Constant attendance during many years on a dying and beloved mother, and her deeply religious feelings, had first broken and then controlled, a spirit which nature had intended to be arrogant and haughty. Her father she adored; and she seemed to devote to him all that consideration which, with more common characters, is generally distributed among their acquaintance.

I hint at her faults. How shall I describe

her virtues? Her unbounded generosity — her dignified simplicity — her graceful frankness — her true nobility of thought and feeling — her firmness—her courage and her truth—her kindness to her inferiors — her constant charity — her devotion to her parents — her sympathy with sorrow — her detestation of oppression — her pure unsullied thoughts — her delicate taste — her deep religion. All these combined would have formed a delightful character, even if unaccompanied with such brilliant talents and such brilliant beauty. Accustomed from an early age to the converse of courts, and the forms of the most polished circles, her manner became her blood, her beauty, and her mind. Yet she rather acted in unison with the spirit of society, than obeyed its minutest decree. She violated etiquette with a wilful grace, which made the outrage a precedent, and she mingled with princes without feeling her inferiority. Nature, and art, and fortune were the graces who had combined to form this

girl. She was a jewel set in gold, and worn by a king.

Her creed had made her, in ancient Christendom, feel less an alien; but when she returned to that native country which she had never forgotten, she found that creed her degradation. Her indignant spirit clung with renewed ardour to the crushed altars of her faith; and not before those proud shrines where cardinals officiate, and a thousand acolytes fling their censers, had she bowed with half the abandonment of spirit with which she invoked the Virgin in her oratory at Dacre.

The recent death of her mother rendered Mr. Dacre and herself little inclined to enter into society; and as they were both desirous of residing on that estate from which they had been so long and so unwillingly absent, they had not yet visited London. The greater part of their time had been passed chiefly in communication with those great Catholic families with whom the Dacres were allied, and to which

they belonged. The modern race of the Howards, and the Cliffords, the Talbots, the Arundels, and the Jerninghams, were not unworthy of their proud progenitors. Miss Dacre observed with respect, and assuredly with sympathy, the mild dignity, the noble patience, the proud humility, the calm hope, the uncompromising courage, with which her father and his friends sustained their oppression, and lived, as proscribed, in the realm which they had created. Yet her lively fancy and gay spirit found less to admire in the feelings which influenced these families in their intercourse with the world, which induced them to foster but slight intimacies out of the pale of the proscribed, and which tinged their domestic life with that formal and gloomy colouring which ever accompanies a monotonous existence. Her disposition told her, that all this affected non-interference with the business of society might be politic, but assuredly was not pleasant; her quick sense whispered to her it was unwise,

and that it retarded, not advanced, the great result in which her sanguine temper dared often to indulge. Under any circumstances, it did not appear to her to be wisdom to second the efforts of their oppressors for their degradation or their misery, and to seek no consolation in the amiable feelings of their fellow-creatures, for the stern rigour of their unsocial government. But, independent of all general principles, Miss Dacre could not but believe that it was the duty of the Catholic gentry to mix more with that world which so misconceived their spirit. Proud in her conscious knowledge of their exalted virtues, she felt that they had only to be known to be recognised as the worthy leaders of that nation which they had so often saved, and never betrayed.

She did not conceal her opinions from the circle in which they had grown up. All the young members were her disciples, and were decidedly of opinion, that if the House of Lords would but listen to May Dacre, emancipation

would be a settled thing. Her logic would have destroyed Lord Liverpool's arguments — her wit, extinguished Lord Eldon's jokes. But the elder members only shed a solemn smile, and blessed May Dacre's shining eyes and sanguine spirit.

Her greatest supporter was Mrs. Dallington Vere. This lady was a distant relation of Mr. Dacre. At seventeen, she, herself a Catholic, had married Mr. Dallington Vere, of Dallington House, a Catholic gentleman of considerable fortune, whose age resembled his wealth. No sooner had this incident taken place, than did Mrs. Dallington Vere dash up to London, and soon evinced a most laudable determination to console herself for her husband's political disabilities. Mrs. Dallington Vere went to Court; and Mrs. Dallington Vere gave suppers after the Opera, and concerts which, in number and in brilliancy, were only equalled by her balls. The Dandies patronized her, and selected her for their Muse. The Duke of Shrop-

shire betted on her always at *Ecarté;* and, to crown the whole affair, she made Mr. Dallington Vere lay claim to a dormant peerage. The women were all pique — the men all patronage. A Protestant Minister was alarmed; and Lord Squib supposed that Mrs. Dallington must be the Scarlet Lady of which they had heard so often.

Season after season, she kept up the ball; and although, of course, she no longer made an equal sensation, she was not less brilliant, nor her position less eminent. She had got into the best set, and was more quiet, like a patriot in place. Never was there a gayer lady than Mrs. Dallington Vere, but never a more prudent one. Her virtue was only equalled by her discretion; but as the odds were equal, Lord Squib betted on the last. People sometimes indeed did say—they always will—but what is talk? Mere breath. And reputation is marble, and iron, and sometimes brass; and so, you see, talk has no chance. They did say, that Sir Lucius Grafton was

about to enter into the Romish communion; but then it turned out that it was only to get a divorce from his wife, on the plea that she was a heretic. The fact was, Mrs. Dallington Vere was a most successful woman, lucky in every thing, lucky even in her husband—for he died. He did not only die. He left his whole fortune to his wife. Some said that his relations were going to set aside the will, on the plea that it was written with a crow-quill on pink paper; but this was false—it was only a codicil.

All eyes were on a very pretty woman, with fifteen thousand a-year, and only twenty-three. The Duke of Shropshire wished he was disembarrassed. Such a player of *Ecarté* might double her income. Lord Raff advanced, trusting to his beard, and young Amadée de Roverie mortgaged his dressing-case, and came post from Paris; but he was more particular about his ruffles than some other parts of his dress; and so, in spite of his sky-blue nether garments

and his Hessians, he followed my Lord's example, and re-crossed the water. It is even said that Lord Squib was sentimental; but this must have been the malice of Charles Annesley.

All, however, failed. The truth is, Mrs. Dalington Vere had nothing to gain by re-entering Paradise, which matrimony, of course, is; and so she determined to remain mistress of herself. She had gained fashion, and fortune, and rank; she was young, and she was pretty. She thought it might be possible for a discreet, experienced little lady, to lead a very pleasant life, without being assisted in her expenses, or disturbed in her diversion, by a gentleman who called himself her husband, occasionally asked her how she slept in a bed which he did not share, or munificently presented her with a necklace purchased with her own money. Discreet Mrs. Dallington Vere!

She had been absent from London during the past season, having taken it also into her head to travel. She was equally admired and

equally plotted for at Rome, at Paris, and at Vienna, as at London; but the bird had not been caught, and, flying away, left many a despairing Prince and amorous Count to muse over their lean visages and meagre incomes.

Dallington House made its fair mistress a neighbour of her relations, the Dacres. No one could be a more fascinating companion than Mrs. Dallington Vere. May Dacre read her character at once, and these ladies became great allies. She was to assist Miss Dacre in her plans for rousing their Catholic friends, as no one was better qualified to be her adjutant. Already they had commenced their operations, and balls at Dallington and Dacre, frequent, splendid, and various, had already made the Catholic houses the most eminent in the Riding, and their brilliant mistresses the heroines of all the youth.

CHAPTER V.

IT rained all night without ceasing: yet the morrow was serene. Nevertheless the odds had shifted. On the evening, they had not been more than two to one against the first favourite, the Duke of St. James' *ch. c. Sans-pareil* by *Ne plus Ultra;* while they were five to one against the second favourite, Mr. Dash's *gr. c. the Dandy* by *Banker*, and nine and ten to one against the next in favour. This morning, however, affairs were altered. Mr. Dash and his Dandy were at the head of the poll; and as the owner rode his own horse, being a jockey and a fit rival for the Duke of St. James,

his backers were sanguine. *Sanspareil* was, however, the second favourite.

The Duke, however, was confident as an universal conqueror, and came on in his usual state, —rode round the course,—inspirited Lady Aphrodite, who was all anxiety,—betted with Miss Dacre, and bowed to Mrs. Dallington.

There were more than ninety horses, and yet the start was fair. But the result? Pardon me! The fatal remembrance overpowers my pen. An effort and some *Eau de Portingale*, and I shall recover. The first favourite was never heard of, the second favourite was never seen after the distance post, all the ten-to-oners were in the rear, and a *dark* horse, which had never been thought of, and which the careless St. James had never even observed in the list, rushed past the grand stand in sweeping triumph. The spectators were almost too surprised to cheer; but when the name of the winner was detected, there was a deafening shout, particularly from the Yorkshiremen. The

victor was the Earl of St. Jerome's *b. f. May Dacre* by *Howard*.

Conceive the confusion! *Sanspareil* was at last discovered, and immediately shipped off for Newmarket, as young gentlemen, who get into scrapes, are sent to travel. The Dukes of Burlington and Shropshire exchanged a few hundreds. The Duchess and Charles Annesley, a few gloves. The consummate Lord Bloomerly, though a backer of the favourite, in compliment to his host, contrived to receive from all parties, and particularly from St. Maurice. The sweet little Wrekins were absolutely ruined. Sir Lucius looked blue, but he had hedged; and Lord Squib looked yellow, but some doubted. Lord Hounslow was done, and Lord Bagshot was diddled.

The Duke of St. James was perhaps the heaviest sufferer on the field, and certainly bore his losses the best. Had he seen the five-and-twenty thousand he was *minus* counted before him, he probably would have been staggered;

but as it was, another crumb of his half million was gone. The loss existed only in idea. It was really too trifling to think of, and he galloped up to May Dacre, and was among the warmest of her congratulators.

"I would offer your Grace my sympathy for your congratulations," said Miss Dacre in a rather amiable tone, "but"—and here she resumed her usual air of mockery,—"you are too great a man to be affected by so light a casualty.—And now that I recollect myself, did you run a horse?"

"Why—no; the fault was, I believe, that he would not run; but *Sanspareil* is as great a hero as ever. He has only been conquered by the elements."

The dinner at the Duke of St. James's was this day more splendid even than the preceding. He was determined to show, that the disappointment had produced no effect upon the temper of so imperial a personage as himself, and he invited several of the leading gen-

try to join his *coterie*. The Dacres were among the solicited; but they were, during the races, the guests of Mrs. Dallington Vere, whose seat was only a mile off, and therefore were unobtainable.

Blazed the plate, sparkled the wine, and the aromatic venison sent forth its odorous incense to the skies. The favourite cook had done wonders, though a *Sanspareil Pâté*, on which he had been meditating for a week, was obliged to be suppressed, and was sent up as a *Tourte à la Bourbon*, in compliment to his Royal Highness. It was a delightful party:—all the stiffness of metropolitan society disappeared. All talked, and laughed, and eat, and drank; and the Protocolis and the French Princes, who were most active members of a banquet, ceased sometimes, from want of breath, to moralize on the English character. The little Wrekins, with their well-acted lamentations over their losses, were capital; and Sophy nearly smiled and chattered her head this day into the rever-

sion of the coronet of Fitz-Pompey. May she succeed! For a wilder little partridge never yet flew. Caroline St. Maurice alone was sad, and would not be comforted; although St. James, observing her gloom, and guessing at its cause, had in private assured her that, far from losing, on the whole he was perhaps even a winner.

None, however, talked more agreeable nonsense, and made a more elegant uproar, than the Duke of St. James.

"These young men," whispered Lord Squib to Annesley, "do not know the value of money. We must teach it them.—I know too well—I find it very dear."

If the old physicians are correct in considering from twenty-five to thirty-five as the period of lusty youth, Lord Squib was still a lusty youth, though a very corpulent one, indeed. The Carnival of his life, however, was nearly over, and probably the termination of the race-week might hail him a man. He was the best

fellow in the world; short and sleek, half bald, and looked fifty; with a waist, however, which had not yet vanished, and where Art successfully controlled rebellious Nature, like the Austrians the Lombards. If he were not exactly a wit, he was still, however, full of unaffected fun, and threw out the results of a *roué* life with considerable ease and point. He had inherited a very fair and peer-like property, which he had contrived to embarrass in so complicated and extraordinary a manner, that he had been a ruined man for years, and yet lived well on an income allowed him by his creditors to manage his estate for their benefit. The joke was, he really managed it very well. It was his hobby, and he prided himself, especially, upon his character as a man of business.

The banquet is certainly the best preparative for the ball, if its blessings be not abused, and then you get heavy. Your true votary of Terpsichore, and of him I only speak, requires, particularly in a land of easterly winds, which

cut into his cab-head at every turn of every street, some previous process to make his blood set him an example in dancing. It is strong Burgundy, and his sparkling sister Champaigne, that make a race-ball always so amusing a divertisement. One enters the room with a gay elation, which defies rule without violating etiquette, and in these county meetings, there is a variety of character, and classes, and manners, which are highly interesting, and afford an agreeable contrast to those more brilliant and refined assemblies, the members of which, being educated by exactly the same system, and with exactly the same ideas, think, look, move, talk, dress, and even eat, alike — the only remarkable personage being a woman somewhat more beautiful than the beauties who surround her, and a man rather more original in his affectations than the puppies that surround him. The proof of the general dulness of polite circles is the great sensation that is always produced by a new face. The

season always commences briskly, because there are so many. Ball, and dinner, and concert, collect them plentiful votaries; but as we move on, the dulness will develope itself, and then come the morning breakfast, and the water party, and the *fête champetre*, all desperate attempts to produce variety with old materials, and to occasion a second effect by a cause which is already exhausted.

These philosophical remarks precede another introduction to the public ball-room at Doncaster. Mrs. Dallington Vere and Miss Dacre are walking, arm in arm, at the upper end of the room.

"You are disappointed, love, about Arundel?" said Mrs. Dallington.

"Bitterly; I never counted on any event more certainly than on his return this summer."

"And why tarryeth the wanderer—unwillingly of course?"

"Lord Darrell, who was to have gone over as *Chargé d'affaires*, has announced to his father

the impossibility of his becoming a diplomatist; so our poor *attaché* suffers, and is obliged to bear the *portefeuille ad interim.*"

"Does your cousin like Vienna?"

"Not at all. He is a regular John Bull; and if I am to judge from his correspondence, he will make an excellent ambassador, in one sense, for I think his fidelity and his patriotism may be depended on. We seldom serve those whom we do not love; and if I am to believe Arundel, there is neither a person nor a place on the whole Continent, that affords him the least satisfaction."

"How singular, then, that he should have fixed on such a *metier;* but I suppose, like other young men, his friends fixed for him?"

"Not at all. No step could be less pleasing to my father, than his leaving England; but Arundel is quite unmanageable, even by Papa. He is the oddest, but the dearest, person in the world!"

"He is very clever, is he not?"

"I think so. I have no doubt he will distinguish himself, whatever career he runs; but he is so extremely singular in his manner, that I do not think his general reputation harmonizes with my private opinion."

"And will his visit to England be a long one?"

"I hope that it will be a permanent one. I, you know, am his confident, and entrusted with all his plans. If I succeed in arranging something according to his wishes, I hope that he will not again quit us."

"I pray you may, sweet! and wish, love! for your sake, that he would enter the room this moment."

"This is the most successful meeting, I should think, that ever was known at Doncaster," said Miss Dacre. "We are, at least, indebted to the Duke of St. James for a very agreeable party, to say nothing of all the gloves we have won."

"How do you like the Duke of Burlington?"

"Very much. There is a calm courtliness about him which I think very imposing. He is the only man I ever saw, who, without being very young, was not an unfit companion for youth. And there is no affectation of juvenility about him. He involuntarily reminds you of youth, as an empty orchestra does of music."

"I shall tell him this. He is already your devoted; and I have no doubt that, inspired at the same time by your universal charms, and our universal hints, I shall soon hail you Duchess of Burlington. Don Arundel will repent his diplomacy."

"I thought I was to be another Duchess this morning."

"You deserve to be a triple one. But dream not of the unhappy patron of *Sanspareil*. There is something in his eyes which tells me he is not a marrying man."

There was a momentary pause, and Miss Dacre spoke.

"I like his brother Steward very much,

Bertha. Sir Lucius is very witty and very candid. It is an agreeable thing to see a man, who has been so very gay, and who has had so many temptations to be gay, turn into a regular domestic character, without losing any of those qualities which made him an ornament to society. When men of the world terminate their career as prudently as Sir Lucius, I observe that they are always amusing companions, because they are perfectly unaffected."

"No one is more unaffected than Lucius Grafton. I am quite happy to find you like him; for he is an old friend of mine, and I know that he has a good heart."

"I like him especially, because he likes you."

"Dearest!"

"He introduced me to Lady Afy. I perceive that she is very attached to her husband."

"Lady Afy is a charming woman. I know no woman so truly elegant as Lady Afy. The young Duke, you know, they say, greatly admires Lady Afy."

"Oh! does he? Well now, I should have thought her father a sentimental and serious donna—one very unlikely—"

"Hush! here come two cavaliers."

The Dukes of Burlington and St. James advanced.

"We are attracted by observing two nymphs wandering in this desert," said his Grace of Burlington. This was the Burgundy.

"And we wish to know whether there be any dragon to destroy, any ogre to devour, any magician to massacre, or how, when, and where, we can testify our devotion to the ladies of our love," added his Grace of St. James. This was the Champaigne.

"The age of chivalry is past," said May Dacre. "Bores have succeeded to dragons, and I have shivered too many lances in vain, ever to hope for their extirpation; and as for enchantments——"

"They depend only upon yourself," gallantly interrupted the Duke of Burgundy. Psha!—Burlington.

"Our spells are dissolved, our wands are sunk five fathom deep; we had retired to this solitude, and we were moralizing," said Mrs. Dallington Vere.

"Then you were doing an extremely useless, and not very magnanimous thing," said the Duke of St. James; "for to moralize in a desert is no great exertion of philosophy. You should moralize in a drawing-room; and so let me propose our return to that world, which must long have missed us. Let us do something to astound these elegant barbarians. Look at that young gentleman: how stiff he is! A Yorkshire Apollo! Look at that old lady: how elaborately she simpers! The Venus of the Riding! They absolutely attempt to flirt. Let us give them a gallop!"

He was advancing to salute this provincial couple; but his more matured companion repressed him.

"Ah! I forgot," said the young Duke. "I am Yorkshire. If I were a western gent, like

yourself, I might compromise my character. Your Grace monopolizes the fun."

"I think your Grace may safely attack them," said Miss Dacre. "I do not think you will be recognised. People entertain, in this barbarous country, such vulgar, old-fashioned notions of a Duke of St. James, that I have not the least doubt your Grace might have a good deal of fun without being found out."

"There is no necessity," said his Grace, "to fly from Miss Dacre for amusement. By the by, you made a very good repartee. You must permit me to introduce you to my friend, Lord Squib. I am sure you would agree so."

"I have been introduced to Lord Squib."

"And you found him most amusing? Did he say any thing which vindicates my appointment of him as my court-jester?"

"I found him very modest. He endeavoured to excuse his errors, by being your companion: and to prove his virtues by being mine."

"Treacherous Squib! I positively must call him out. Duke, bear him a cartel."

"The quarrel is ours, and must be decided here," said Mrs. Dallington Vere. "I second Miss Dacre."

"We are in the way of some good people here, I think," said the Duke of Burlington, who, though the most dignified, was the most considerate of men; "at least, here are a stray couple, or two, staring as if they wished us to understand we prevented a set."

"Let them stare," said the Duke of St. James; "we were made to be looked at. 'Tis our vocation, Hal, and they are gifted with vision purposely to behold us."

"Your Grace," said Miss Dacre, "reminds me of my old friend, Prince Rubarini, who told me one day, that when he got up late, he always gave orders to have the sun put back a couple of hours."

"And you, Miss Dacre, remind me of my old friend, the Duchess of Nemours, who told

me one day, that, in the course of her experience, she had only met one man who was her rival in repartee."

"And that man?" asked Mrs. Vere.

"Was your slave, Mrs. Dallington," said the young Duke, bowing profoundly, with his hand on his heart.

"I remember she said the same thing to me," said the Duke of Burlington, "about ten years before."

"That was her grandmother, Burley," said the Duke of St. James.

"Her grandmother!" said Mrs. Dallington, exciting the contest.

"Decidedly," said the young Duke. "I remember my friend always spoke of the Duke of Burlington as grandpapa."

"You will profit, I have no doubt, then, by the company of so venerable a friend," said Miss Dacre.

"Why," said the young Duke, "I am not a believer in the perfectibility of the species;

and you know, that when we come to a certain point—"

"We must despair of improvement," said the Duke of Burlington.

"Your Grace came forward, like a true knight, to my rescue," said Miss Dacre, bowing to the Duke of Burlington.

"Beauty can inspire miracles," said the Duke of St. James.

"This young gentleman has been spoiled by travel, Miss Dacre," said the Duke of Burlington. "You have much to answer for, for he tells every one that you were his guardian."

The eyes of Miss Dacre and the Duke of St. James met. His Grace bowed with that elegant impudence, which is, after all, the best explanation for every possible misunderstanding.

"I always heard that the Duke of St. James was born of age," said Miss Dacre.

"The report was very rife on the Continent when I travelled," said Mrs. Dallington Vere.

"That was only a poetical allegory, which

veiled the precocious results of my fair tutor's exertions."

"How very discreet he is!" said the Duke of Burlington. "You may tell immediately that he is two-and-forty."

"We are neither of us, though, off the *pavé* yet, Burlington,—so what say you to inducing these inspiring muses to join the waltz, which is just now commencing?"

The young Duke offered his hand to Miss Dacre, and followed by their companions, they were in a few minutes lost in the waves of the waltzers.

CHAPTER VI.

The gaieties of the race-week closed with a ball at Dallington House. As the pretty mistress of this proud mansion was acquainted with all the members of the ducal party, our hero and his noble band were among those who honoured it with their presence.

We really have had so many balls both in this and other as immortal works, published since the reformation of literature,—which I date from the moment that the grey goose quill was first guided by a hand shaded by a blonde ruffle, or sparkling with a jewelled ring,—that, in a literary point of view, I think I must give up dancing; nor would I have introduced you to Dallington House, if I had no more serious

business on hand than a flirtation with a lady or a lobster salad.

Ah! why is not a little brief communion with the last as innocent as with the first! Oysters and eggs, they say, are amatory food. Ceres and Bacchus have the reputation of being the favourite companions of Venus. The morality of the present age must be ascribed, then, to its temperance, or its indigestion. Oh! Abernethy, mildest of mankind! Oh! Brodie, blander than Favonian breezes!—why, why, then cure us? why send us forth with renovated livers, to lose our souls through salads and the sex!

Small feet are flitting in the mazy dance, and music winds with inspiring harmony through halls, whose lofty mirrors multiply beauty, and add fresh lustre to the blazing lamps. May Dacre there is wandering like a peri in paradise, and Lady Aphrodite is glancing with her dazzling brow, yet an Asmodeus might detect an occasional gloom over her radiant face. It

is but for an instant, yet it thrills. She looks like some favoured sultana, who muses for a moment amid her splendour on her early love.

And she, the sparkling mistress of this scene —say, where is she? Not among the dancers, though a more graceful form you would scarcely look upon; not even among her guests, though a more accomplished hostess it would be hard to find. Gaiety pours forth its flood and all are thinking of themselves, or of some one sweeter even than self-consciousness, or else perhaps one absent might be missed.

Leaning on the arm of Sir Lucius Grafton, and shrouded in her cachemire, Mrs. Dallington Vere paces the terrace in earnest conversation.

"If I fail in this," said Sir Lucius, "I shall be desperate. Fortune seems to have sent him for the very purpose. Think only of the state of affairs for a moment. After a thousand plots on my part—after having for the last two years never ceased my exertions to make her commit herself, when neither a love of pleasure,

nor a love of revenge, nor the thoughtlessness to which women in her situation generally have recourse, produced the slightest effect:—this stripling starts upon the stage, and in a moment the iceberg melts. Oh! I never shall forget the rapture of the moment when the faithful Lachen announced the miracle!"

"But why not let the adventure take the usual course? You have your evidence, or you can get it. Finish the business. These *exposées*, to be sure, are disagreeable enough; but to be the talk of the town for a week is no great suffering. Go to Baden, drink the waters, and it will be forgotten. Surely, this is an inconvenience not to be weighed for a moment against the great result."

"Believe me, my dearest friend, Lucy Grafton cares very little about the babble of the million, provided it do not obstruct him in his objects. Would to Heaven I could proceed in the summary and effectual mode you point out! but that I much doubt. There is about Afy,

in spite of all her softness and humility, a strange spirit, a cursed courage, or obstinacy, which sometimes has blazed out, when I have over-galled her, in a way half awful. I confess I dread her standing at bay. I am in her power, and a divorce she could successfully oppose, if I appeared to be the person who hastened the catastrophe, and she were piqued to show that she would not fall an easy victim. No, no! I have a surer, though a more difficult, game. She is intoxicated with this boy. I will drive her into his arms."

"A probable result, forsooth! I do not think your genius, Baronet, has particularly brightened since we last met. I thought your letters were getting dull. You seem to forget, that there is a third person to be consulted in this adventure. And why, in the name of Doctors' Commons, the Duke is to close his career by marrying a woman of whom, with your leave, he is already, if experience be not a dream, half wearied, is really past my comprehension, although as

Yorkshire, Lucy, I should not, you know, be the least apprehensive of mortals."

"I depend upon my unbounded influence over St. James."

"What! do you mean to recommend the step, then?"

"Hear me! At present I am his confidential counsellor on all subjects—"

"But one."

"Patience, fair dame—and I have hitherto imperceptibly, but efficiently, exerted my influence to prevent his getting entangled with any other nets."

"Faithful friend!"

"*Point de moinerie!* Listen. I depend further upon his perfect inexperience of women,—for, in spite of his numerous gallantries, he has never yet had a grand passion, and is quite ignorant, even at this moment, how involved his feelings are with his mistress. He has not yet learnt the bitter lesson, that unless we despise a woman when we cease to love her, we are still

a slave, without the consolement of intoxication. I depend further upon his strong feelings, for strong I perceive they are, with all his affectation, and on his weakness of character, which will allow him to be the dupe of his first great emotion. It is to prevent that explosion from taking place under any other roof but my own, that I now require your advice and assistance, —that advice and assistance, which already have done so much for me. I like not this sudden and uncontemplated visit to Castle Dacre. I fear these Dacres—I fear the revulsion of his feelings. Above all, I fear that girl!"

"But her cousin—is he not a talisman? She loves him."

"Pooh! a cousin! Is not the name an answer? She loves him, as she loves her pony, because he was her companion when she was a child, and kissed her when they gathered strawberries together. The pallid, moonlight passion of a cousin, and an absent one too, has but a sorry chance against the blazing beams that

shoot from the eyes of a new lover. Would to Heaven that I had not to go down to my boobies at Cleve! I should like nothing better than to amuse myself an autumn at Dallington with the little Dacre, and put an end to such an unnatural and irreligious connection. She is a splendid creature! Bring her to town next season."

"But to the point. You wish me, I imagine, to act the same part with the lady, as you have done with the gentleman. I am to step in, I suppose, as the confidential counsellor on all subjects of sweet May. I am to preserve her from a youth whose passions are so impetuous, and whose principles are so unformed!"

"Admirable Bertha! You read my thoughts."

"But suppose I endanger, instead of advance, your plans. Suppose, for instance, *I* captivate his Grace. As extraordinary things have happened, as you know. High place must be respected, and the coronet of a Duchess must not be despised."

"All considerations must yield to you, as do all men," said Sir Lucius, with ready gallantry, but not free from anxiety.

"No, no, Lucy, there is no danger of that. I am not going to play traitress to my system, even for the Duke of St. James; therefore, anything that occurs between us shall be merely an incident *pour passer le temps seulement*, and to preserve our young friend from the little Dacre. I have no doubt he will behave very well, and that I shall send him safe to Cleve Park in a fortnight with a very good character. I would recommend you, however, not to encourage any unreasonable delay."

"Certainly not; but I must, of course, be guided by circumstances." Sir Lucius observed truly. There were other considerations besides getting rid of his spouse, which cemented his friendship with the young Duke. It will be curious, if lending a few thousands to the husband, save our hero from the wife. There is no such thing as unmixed evil. A man who

loses his money, gains, at least, experience, and sometimes something better. But what the Duke of St. James gained is not yet to be told. Time flies, and developes all things. I am, at present, writing the first volume of this veracious history—but Fate alone can decide whether you shall read the second. I may dine this day with Sir Epicure Mammon, and die—as my host will, over the third course. I may be flung off my horse at Grosvenor Gate, from the sudden entrance of Mrs. Argent and her new liveries. I mean that lady who, when her husband became an M. P., began franking her invitations by the twopenny, or particular post. But our friends are still on the terrace.

"And you like Lachen?" asked Mrs. Dallington.

"Very much."

"I formed her with great care, but you must keep her in good humour."

"That is not difficult. *Elle est très jolie;* and pretty women, like yourself, are always good-natured."

"But has she really worked herself into the confidence of the virtuous Aphrodite?"

"Entirely. And the humour is, that Lachen has persuaded her, that Lachen herself is on the best possible terms with my confidential valet, and can make herself at all times mistress of her master's secrets. So it is always in my power, apparently without taking the slightest interest in Afy's conduct, to regulate it as I will. At present, she believes that my affairs are in a very distracted state, and that I intend to reside solely on the Continent, and to bear her off from her Cupidon. This thought haunts her rest, and hangs heavy on her waking mind. I think it will do the business."

"We have been too long absent. Let us return."

"I accompany you, my charming friend. What should I do without such an ally? I only wish that I could assist you in a manner equally friendly. Is there no obdurate hero, who wants a confidential adviser to dilate upon

your charms, or to counsel him to throw himself at your feet; or are that beautiful face and lovely form, as they must always be, invincible?"

"I assure you quite disembarrassed of any attentions whatever. But I suppose, when I return to Athens, I must get Platonic again."

"Let me be the philosopher!"

"No, no, Lucy; we know each other too well. I have been free ever since that fatal affair of young Darrell, and travel has restored my spirits a little. They say, his brother is just as handsome. He was expected at Vienna, but I could not meet him, although I suppose, as I made him a Viscount, I am rather popular than not with him."

"Pooh! pooh! think not of this. No one blames you. You are still a universal favourite. But I would recommend you nevertheless to take me as your cavalier."

"You are too generous, Baronet, or too bold. No, man! I am tired of flirtation, and really

think, for variety sake, I must fall in love. After all, there is nothing like the delicious dream, though it be but a dream.—Spite of my discretion, I sometimes tremble lest I should end by making myself a fool—with some grand passion.—You look serious. Fear not for the young Duke. He is a dazzling gentleman, but not a hero exactly to my taste."

CHAPTER VII.

THE moment that was to dissolve the spell which had combined and enchanted so many thousands of human beings, arrived. Nobles and nobodys, beauties and blacklegs, dispersed in all directions. The Duke of Burlington carried off the French Princes and the Protocolis, the Bloomerlys and the Vaticans, to his Paradise of Marringworth. The Fitz-pompeys cantered off with the Shropshires—omen of felicity to the enamoured St. Maurice—and the enamouring Sophy. Annesley and Squib return to their *pâtés*. Sir Lucius and Lady Aphrodite, neither of them with tempers like summer skies, betook their way to Cambridge-

shire, like Adam and Eve from the glorious garden. The Duke of St. James dashed off for Dacre. He had already sent before him his groom and horses, and one carriage containing Luigi, Spiridion, and two pages, and now he followed, accompanied only by his Jager, and a single servant.

As his carriage rolled on, he revelled in delicious fancies. The young Duke built castles not only at Hauteville, but in less substantial regions. Reverie, in the flush of our warm youth, generally indulges in the future. We are always anticipating the next adventure, and clothe the coming heroine with a rosy tint. When we advance a little on our limited journey, and an act or two of the comedy, the gayest in all probability, are over, the wizard Memory dethrones the witch Imagination, and 'tis the past on which the mind feeds in its musings. 'Tis then we ponder on each great result, which has stolen on us without the labour of reflection; 'tis then we analyze emo-

tions which, at the time, we could not comprehend, and probe the action which Passion inspired, and which Prejudice has hitherto defended. Alas! who can strike these occasional balances in Life's great ledger without a sigh! Alas! how little do they promise in favour of the great account! What whisperings of final bankruptcy! what a damnable consciousness of present insolvency! My friends! what a blunder is youth! Ah! why does Truth light her torch, but to illume the ruined temple of our existence! Ah! why do we know we are men, only to be conscious of our exhausted energies!

And yet there is a pleasure in a deal of judgment, which your judicious man alone can understand. It is agreeable to see some younkers falling into the same traps which have broken our own shins; and, shipwrecked on the island of our hopes, one likes to mark a vessel go down full in sight. 'Tis demonstration that we are not branded as Cains among the favour-

ed race of man. Then giving advice — that is delicious, and perhaps repays one all. It is a privilege your grey-haired Signors solely can enjoy; but young men now-a-days may make some claim to it. And, after all, experience is a thing that all men praise. Bards sing its glories, and proud Philosophy has long elected it her favourite child. 'Tis the τὸ καλὸν, in spite of all its ugliness, and the elixir vitæ, though we generally gain it with a shattered pulse.

No more! no more! it is a bitter cheat, the consolation of blunderers, the last refuge of expiring hopes, the forlorn battalion that is to capture the citadel of Happiness — yet, yet impregnable! Oh! what is Wisdom, and what is Virtue, without youth! Talk not to me of knowledge of mankind; — give, give me back the sunshine of the breast which they o'erclouded! Talk not to me of proud morality — oh! give me innocence!

" Sir, Sir, what is all this about? Let us

get on with the story. A reason for this delay. Is it gentlemanly? Is it courteous? Is it what might have been expected from you? So great a favourite, though so new a writer! Speak, —clear yourself!"

Oh! Madam, if you be a Madam, as I hope, why, why excruciate with these queries? Postilions must be paid and horses changed, and now 'tis done, and so we'll on our journey.

Our hero's thoughts were of a very different complexion to those that lately broke out but unawares. The fact is, that a slight, amiable egotism is my weakness, which all excuse as well as admire, upon this plea, that I am strictly an anonymous writer, and consequently, being utterly unknown, am therefore permitted occasionally to illustrate my profound oracles respecting human nature, by the specimen of it which I have most profoundly studied. If I wrote for fame, and had a lithographic portrait of myself appended to this first volume, this self-introduction would then be in as " bad

taste" as it is now in good, and as utterly reprehensible as it is now worthy of all panegyric; but as I only write for fun, and am even less desirous of being known by the public than they can be of knowing me, why, let it pass.

"But why then publish, Sir?"

Beautiful being! that you should be amused. Is it nothing to feel, amid this solitude, that bright eyes are glancing o'er my thoughts? Besides, I like to make a little noise——in a quiet way, as peaceable gentlemen slide into a row at night.

An urchin sometimes will disturb the abstraction of his assembled fellow-students with a shrill and sudden whistle. All start, all stare, and the pedagogue fumes. Yet no one looks more astonished, more indignant at the disturbance than the rioter himself; and there he sits alike undetected, and desirous to be concealed, inspired at the same time by a love of fun and a contempt of fame.

He is a true philosopher, and might teach

us more than we care to learn. He who teaches that enjoyment is the great object of existence, and that this can be obtained without the permission of your worships, is a heretic against the creed of cant. Now, if, instead of amusing you and myself, I were, which probably some day I may, to cut all your throats, or mend all your morals, what a wonderful fellow you would instantly dub me! What odes, what medals, what shifting diadems, what changing sceptres, what cheers from widows whose blood had washed my chariot wheels, what grants from parliaments,—themselves ready to receive! I say nothing of the public dinner and the private praise. These are small deer. Yet a life in the National Library is not to be despised; and it is something to have one's portrait in demand among the Sandwich Isles.

To conquer and to cant—these are the modes to rule mankind. Must they be so for ever? Is it a dream that flits across my mind, fed by the silence of this sacred place; or is it

revelation? Yes, yes, methinks a softer voice, a sweeter breath, moves on the wings of coming time, and whispers consolation.

Amid the ruins of eternal Rome, I scribble pages lighter than the wind, and feed with fancies volumes which will be forgotten, ere I can hear that they are even published. Yet am I not one insensible to the magic of my memorable abode, and I could pour my passion o'er the land; but I repress my thoughts, and beat their tide back to their hollow caves!

The ocean of my mind is calm, but dim, and ominous of storms that may arise. A cloud hangs heavy o'er the horizon's verge, and veils the future. Even now, a star appears, steals into light, and now again 'tis gone! I hear the proud swell of the growing waters,—I hear the whispering of the wakening winds; but Reason lays her trident on the cresting waves, and all again is hushed.

For I am one, though young, yet old enough to know, Ambition is a demon; and I fly from

what I fear. And Fame has eagle wings, and yet she mounts not as high as man's desires. When all is gained, how little then is won! And yet to gain that little, how much is lost! Let us once aspire, and madness follows. Could we but drag the purple from the hero's heart; could we but tear the laurel from the poet's throbbing brain, and read their doubts, their dangers, their despair, we might learn a greater lesson, than we shall ever acquire by musing over their exploits, or their inspiration. Think of unrecognised Cæsar, with his wasting youth, weeping over the Macedonian's young career! Could Pharsalia compensate for those withering pangs? View the obscure Napoleon starving in the streets of Paris! What was St. Helena to the bitterness of such existence? The visions of past glory might illumine even that dark imprisonment; but to be conscious that his supernatural energies might die away without creating their miracles—can the wheel, or the rack, rival the torture of such a suspicion? Lo!

Byron, bending o'er his shattered lyre, with inspiration in his very rage. And the pert taunt could sting even this child of light! To doubt of the truth of the creed in which you have been nurtured, is not so terrific as to doubt respecting the intellectual vigour on whose strength you have staked your happiness. Yet these were mighty ones; perhaps the records of the world will not yield us three score to be their mates. Then tremble ye, whose cheek glows too warmly at their names! Who would be more than man, should fear lest he be less.

Yet there is hope—there should be happiness—for them—for all! Kind Nature, ever mild, extends her fond arms to her truant children, and breathes her words of solace. As we weep on her indulgent and maternal breast, the exhausted passions, one by one, expire, like gladiators in yon huge pile, that has made barbarity sublime. Yes! there is hope and joy—and it is here!

Where the breeze wanders through a perfumed sky, and where the beautiful sun illumines beauty. On the poet's farm, and on the conqueror's arch, thy beam is lingering! It lingers on the shattered porticoes that once shrouded, from thy o'erpowering glory, the lords of earth; it lingers upon the ruined temples that, even in their desolation, are yet sacred! 'Tis gone, as if in sorrow! Yet the woody lake still blushes with thy warm kiss, and still thy rosy light tinges the pine that breaks the farthest heaven!

A heaven all light, all beauty, and all love! What marvel men should worship in these climes? And lo! a small and single cloud is sailing in the immaculate ether, burnished with twilight, like an Olympian chariot from above, with the fair vision of some graceful God!

It is the hour that poets love; but I crush thoughts that rise from out my mind, like nymphs from out their caves, when sets the sun. Yet 'tis a blessing here to breathe and

muse. And cold his clay indeed who does not yield to thy Ausonian beauty! Clime where the heart softens, and the mind expands! Region of mellowed bliss! Oh! most enchanting land!

When I began this meritorious tale, I had determined to confine myself in the strictest manner to its interesting narration; but blood will show itself, and Nature will have her way, and if I had kept her in, we never could have got on. So, here is an explosion; but if you think that, on the whole, it is rather too sublime and solemn, let me inform you, Sir, that this chapter is no common chapter, but embalms by far the most important incident. not only in this work, but in the life of man. And so, we are at the Park Gates.

They whirled along through a park which would have contained half a hundred of those Patagonian paddocks of modern times, which have usurped the name. At length, the young Duke was roused from his reverie by Carlstein,

proud of his previous knowledge, leaning over and announcing—

"Chateau de Dacre, your Grace!"

The Duke looked up. The sun, which had already set, had tinged with a dying crimson the eastern sky, against which rose a princely edifice. Castle Dacre was the erection of Vanbrugh, an imaginative artist, whose critics I wish no bitterer fate, than not to live in his splendid creations. A spacious centre, richly ornamented, though broken perhaps into rather too much detail, was joined to wings of a corresponding magnificence, by fanciful colonnades. A terrace, extending the whole front, was covered with orange trees, and many a statue, and many an obelisk, and many a temple, and many a fountain, were tinted with the warm twilight. The Duke did not view the forgotten scene of youth without emotion. It was a palace worthy of the heroine on whom he had been musing. The carriage gained the lofty portal. Luigi and the pages were ready to

receive his Grace, who was immediately ushered to the rooms prepared for his reception. The Duke was later than he had intended, and no time was to be unnecessarily lost in his preparation for his appearance.

His Grace's toilette was already prepared: the magical dressing-box had been unpacked, and the shrine for his devotions was covered with richly cut bottles of all sizes, arranged in all the elegant combinations which the picturesque fancy of his valet could devise, adroitly intermixed with the golden instruments, the china vases, and the ivory and rosewood brushes, which were worthy even of Delcroix's exquisite inventions.

The Duke of St. James was master of the art of dress, and consequently consummated that paramount operation with the decisive rapidity of one whose principles are settled. He was cognizant of all effects, could calculate in a second all consequences, and obtained his result with that promptitude and precision which

stamp the great artist (2). For a moment, he was plunged in profound abstraction, and at the same time stretched his legs after his ride. He then gave his orders, with the decision of Wellington on the arrival of the Prussians, and the battle began.

Spiridion stood with a *corbillon* of towels, ready to supply the watchful Luigi, whose duty it was ever to have one in his extended hand. When the ablutions were performed, Luigi came forward, with a richly quilted silken robe, and his Grace, folding himself with the dignity of Cæsar, fell, not at the base of Pompey's statue, but on an Ottoman. Luigi supported his back, while Spiridion, with a fineness of tact of which a Greek is alone susceptible, arranged the *bas de soie*, and fitted the feet into velvet shoes, fastened by buckles of mother-of-pearl. The feet would have become a woman; but the Duke of St. James followed up his advantage; and by having the tube of his white trowsers somewhat amplified at their termina-

tion, the delicate extremities became in their character not merely feminine, but would have filled with envy the mistress of a Mandarin.

Spiridion, then, with an *arrosoir* of agate — exquisite invention of Parisian taste — waters, with the essence of a bank of violets,—that important garment, which in former days was styled the under tunic. This on, Luigi advances, fits it perfectly to the neck; inserts the jewelled studs, and presents, at the same time, the cravat. But do not misconceive me. It was not that indescribable compound of starch and cambric, to which courtesy has too long yielded an honoured name. Oh! no; the Duke of St. James's neck was covered with the finest muslin, delicately strengthened by a process with which Luigi was alone acquainted, and fringed with a fall of blonde, more beautiful, if not as sublime as the fall of Niagara.

His Grace had a taste for magnificence in costume; but he was handsome, young, and a Duke. Pardon him. Yet to-day he was, on

the whole, simple, and with the exception of the pink topaz buttons, which shed their rosy hue over his white silk waistcoat, he wore no jewels. Confident in a complexion whose pellucid lustre had not yielded to a season of dissipation, his Grace did not dread the want of relief which a white face, a white cravat, and a white waistcoat, would seem to imply; nevertheless, the interior of the waistcoat was imperceptibly lined with rose-coloured silk, and a rich and flickering light was thus thrown over the soft beauties of the blonde. The effect, as the cause was concealed, was in a manner supernatural.

Luigi advanced with a coat, of a colour—remember, it was summer—stolen from the neck of Juno's peacock. While he fits it to the back, Spiridion arranges the ruffles, replaces on the favoured finger the signet-ring, and presents his Lord with a handkerchief, which assuredly must have been dropped on that immortal bank, o'er which the South did breathe so

sweetly! A hair chain set in diamonds, worn in memory of the absent Aphrodite, and to pique the present Dacre, is annexed to a glass, which reposes in the waistcoat pocket. This was the only weight that the Duke of St. James ever carried. It was a bore, but it was indispensable.

It is done. He stops one moment before the long pier-glass, and shoots a glance which would have read the mind of Talleyrand. It will do. He assumes the look, the air that befit the occasion: cordial, but dignified; sublime, but sweet. He descends like a deity from Olympus to a banquet of illustrious mortals.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mr. Dacre received him with marked affection: his daughter, with a cordiality which he had never yet experienced from her. Though more simply dressed than when she first met his ardent gaze, her costume again charmed his practised eye. "It must be her shape," thought the young Duke—"it is magical!"

The rooms were full of various guests, and some of these were presented to his Grace, who was of course an object of universal notice, but particularly by those persons who pretended not to be aware of his entrance. The party assembled at Castle Dacre consisted of some thirty or forty persons, all of great considera-

tion, but of a different character to any with whom the Duke of St. James had been acquainted during his short experience of English society. They were not what are called *fashionable* people. I have no Princes and no ambassadors, no Duke who is a gourmand, no Earl who is a jockey, no manœuvring mothers, no flirting daughters, no gambling sons, for your entertainment. There is no superfine gentleman brought down specially from town to gauge the refinement of the manners of the party, and to prevent them by his constant supervision, and occasional sneer, from losing any of the beneficial results of their last campaign. We shall sadly want, too, a Lady Patroness to issue a decree, or quote her code of consolidated etiquette. I am not sure that Almack's will ever be mentioned: I am quite sure that Maradan has never yet been heard of. The Jockey Club may be quoted, but Crockford will be a dead letter. As for the rest, Boodle's is all I can promise, miserable consolation for the bow window.

As for buffoons and artists, to amuse a vacant hour, or sketch a vacant face, I must frankly tell you at once, that there is not one. Are you frightened? Will you go on? Will you trust yourself with these savages? Try. They are rude, but they are hospitable.

The party, I have said, were all persons of great consideration: some were noble, most were rich, all had ancestors. There were the Earl and Countess of Faulconcourt. He looked, as if he were fit to reconquer Palestine, and she, as if she were worthy to reward him for his valour. Misplaced in this superior age, he was *sans peur*, and she *sans reproche*. There was Lord Mildmay, an English Peer, and a French colonel. Methinks such an incident might have been a better reason for a late measure, than an Irishman being returned a member of our Imperial Parliament. But that is past and settled. I say nothing; but if I had been there at the time, which God be praised I was not, I know who would have read a moral lesson or

two, varied the dulness of a worn debate, and shown considerable talent in his way. There was our friend, Lord St. Jerome, of course;—his stepmother, yet young, and some sisters, pretty as nuns. There were some cousins from the farthest North, Northumbria's bleakest bound, who came down upon Yorkshire, like the Goths upon Italy, and were revelling in what they considered a southern clime.

There was an M. P. in whom the Catholics had hopes. He had made a great speech,—not only a great speech, but a great impression. His matter certainly was not new, but well arranged, and his images not singularly original, but appositely introduced—in short, a bore, who speaking on a subject in which a new hand is indulged, and connected with the families whose cause he was pleading, was for once courteously listened to by the very men who determined to avenge themselves for their complaisance by a cough on the first opportunity. But the orator was prudent; he reserved

himself, and the session closed with his fame yet full blown.

Then there were country neighbours in great store, with wives that were treasures, and daughters fresh as flowers. Among them, I would particularize two gentlemen that caught my eye. They were great proprietors, and Catholics and baronets, and consoled themselves by their active maintenance of the game-laws, for their inability to regulate their neighbours by any other. One was Sir Chetwode Chetwode of Chetwode: the other was Sir Tichborne Tichborne of Tichborne. I never saw two men less calculated to be the slaves of a foreign and despotic power, which we all know Catholics are. Tall, and robust, and rosy, with hearts even stouter than their massy frames, they were just the characters to assemble in Runnymede, and probably, even at the present day, might have imitated their ancestors, even in their signatures. In disposition they were much the same, though they were

friends. In person, there were some differences, but they were slight. Sir Chetwode's hair was straight and white; Sir Tichborne's brown and curly. Sir Chetwode's eyes were blue; Sir Tichborne's grey. Sir Chetwode's nose was perhaps a snub; Sir Tichborne's was certainly a bottle. Sir Chetwode was somewhat garrulous, and was often like a man at a play, in the wrong box; Sir Tichborne was somewhat taciturn; but when he spoke, it was always to the purpose, and made an impression, even if it were not new. Both were kind hearts; but Sir Chetwode was jovial, Sir Tichborne, rather stern. Sir Chetwode often broke into a joke, Sir Tichborne sometimes backed into a sneer.

A few of these characters were made known by Mr. Dacre to his young friend, but not many, and in an easy way, — those that stood nearest. Introduction is a formality, and a bore, and is never resorted to by your well-bred host, save in a casual way. When proper people meet at proper houses, they give each

other credit for propriety, and slide into an acquaintance by degrees. The first day, they catch a name; the next, they ask you whether you are the son of General ——. "No, he was my uncle."—"Ah! I knew him well. A worthy soul!" And then the thing is settled. You ride together, shoot or fence, or hunt. A game of billiards will do no great harm; and when you part, you part with a hope that you may meet again.

Lord Mildmay was glad to meet with the son of an old friend. He knew the late Duke well, and loved him better. It is pleasant to hear our fathers praised. We too may inherit their virtues with their lands, or cash, or bonds; and, scapegraces as we are, it is agreeable to find a precedent for the blood turning out well. And, after all, there is no feeling more thoroughly delightful, than to be conscious, that the kind being from whose loins we spring, and to whom we cling with an innate and overpowering love, is viewed by others with regard,

with reverence, or with admiration. There is no pride like the pride of ancestry, for it is a blending of all emotions. How immeasurably superior to the herd is the man only whose father is famous! Imagine, then, the feelings of one who can trace his line through a thousand years of heroes and of princes!

In fathers, Nature gives us kinder friends than proud society can ever yield; and yet we fly too often from the face that beams with fondness on its own creation. But time, and sharp experience, sooner or later, return us to our hearths, though somewhat roughly. A bill that must be paid, a shattered horse, a sulky tailor, a rebellious goldsmith, are not the greatest evils, yet they make one dull, and bring young master quickly to his senses.

'Tis then that Nature speaks with her still voice, so soft and small! 'Tis then we fly to him who, in our adversity, is the only one on whom we surely count. He draws his purse strings, or he draws a cheque, and gives us, with his good assistance, good advice.

Kind soul! beneficent, beloved friend! Oh! let me die the traitor's death, let me be hurled from yon Tarpeian mount, if such it be, if ever I do love thee not; if I wear not thy image in my inmost core,—adore thee living, and revere thee dead!

What though, at this most fatal moment, I am drawing a most unhappy, a most unexpected, and a most unreasonable bill, and at the shortest date! I grant it all—yet pity! pardon! pay!

Well it will be for him who loses such as thee, to find some female friend to smooth the years that yet remain. Woman alone can urge a claim to soften the bitterness of filial recollections. I have half a mind to anticipate the remedy; but the ceremony is really awful. I like the ancient fancy of a wedding. You may mark it on a gem, where Cupid leads his Psyche to the altar—all birds and plumes, all fruit, and flowers, and flame!

In modern days, the most graceful Psyche looks awkward at that hour, and Cupid stands

before her all confessed with cheeks even whiter than his whitest jeans. I say nothing of the parson and the clerk, the anxious mother, and the smirking sire. Even there I could stand. But spare! oh! spare me, the giggling bride's-maids, and the grinning grooms!

'Tis dinner! hour I have loved, as loves the bard the twilight; but no more those visions rise, that once were wont to spring in my quick fancy. The dream is past, the spell is broke, and even the lore, on which I pondered in my first youth, is strange as figures in Egyptian tombs.

No more—no more, oh! never more to me, that hour shall bring its rapture and its bliss! No more—no more, oh! never more for me, shall Flavour sit upon her thousand thrones, and, like a syren with a sunny smile, win to renewed excesses—each more sweet! My feasting days are over: me, no more, the charms of fish, or flesh, still less of fowl, can make the fool of that they made before. (3) The frican-

deau is like a dream of early love; the fricassee, with which I have so often flirted, is like the rattle of the last quadrille; and no longer are my dreams haunted with the dark passion of the rich ragout. Ye soups! o'er whose creation I have watched, like mothers o'er their sleeping child! Ye sauces! to which I have even lent a name, where are ye now? Tickling, perchance, the palate of some easy friend, who quite forgets the boon companion, whose presence once lent lustre even to his ruby wine, and added perfume to his perfumed hock!

Shade of my grandsire!—rightly I invoke thy spirit in the land in which thy restless youth did also wander. Was it for this, that I sat at thy Gamaliel-feet, and tasted knowledge with my earliest years? Was it for this, thy aged eye did gleam with the bright thought, that thy fine taste should survive in thy young posterity? Was it for this, thy favourite Beaujolais prepared the becafico, and procured the truffle! Oh! for an hour of thy Condé soups! Oh!

for the hermitage that Tilney loved! Oh! for the port that flowed alone for Dukes! (4)

Was it for this, thy curious table poured its delicate mysteries to my infant mind — that I, your hope, your joy — I, who praised (or damned) your cook, ere my fourth birthday, should now, with my fifth lustre yet imperfect, with a frame half dying, and a brain half dry— with all my high hopes thrown by in a corner, like a Ridotto cloak, with faded grace, maintain a miserable existence, which is not life, by the atrocious torture of a diet?

A simple sandwich, a severer olive, a cutlet larger than a virgin's cheek, with less of sauce *piquante* than that of rouge; an ortolan or two —ah! once 'twas six; a glass or two, or three, of ruby wine, such as Chianti yields, and Redi sings, strong, and yet mellow — dignified yet mild—these form a meal, that sends me lightly on an evening ride.

And thus glides on a life, which is not life, if life be passion, as I truly think. To feel each

day you hold your bridle with a grasp less firm: each day, to guide even this frivolous pen, with which I beguile a vanishing existence, with a more feeble aim—all this, too, daily teaches a poor gentleman how very quickly the milestones of his life are hurrying on.

What then? We die. What then, again? We go where there is all of hope and nought of fear, to those who, on right subjects, rightly think. My life has been but brief, and in that brevity there has been enough of bitterness; yet have I not lived in vain, since I have learnt to die. To die!—it is a doom that hangs o'er all—to die!—it is a fate that all must meet. Then, let us meet it boldly, and with a calm and holy courage. What we are, we know less than we might; what we shall be, is written on a page which none can read. All here is doubt—all beyond is darkness. Between a troubled sea and covered sky, the mariners grow pale; and yet there is an invisible Pilot hurrying on our barks to shores of lucid light, and havens all repose!

"But what the deuce is death, when dinner is waiting all this time!"

Good Heavens! how can you run on so, Madam! Our Duke but little recked of his decease or his digestion. He pecked as prettily as any bird. Seated on the right hand of his delightful hostess, nobody could be better pleased; supervised by his Jager, who stood behind his chair, no one could be better attended. He smiled, with the calm, amiable complacency of a man who feels the world is quite right. But this chapter must not be too long.

CHAPTER IX.

"HOW is your Grace's horse, *Sanspareil?*" asked Sir Chetwode Chetwode of Chetwode of the Duke of St. James, shooting at the same time a sly glance at his opposite neighbour, Sir Tichborne Tichborne of Tichborne.

"Quite well, Sir," said the Duke in his quietest tone, but with an air which, he flattered himself, might repress further inquiry.

"Has he got over his fatigue?" pursued the dogged Baronet, with a short gritty laugh, that sounded like a loose drag-chain dangling against the stones. "We all thought the Yorkshire air would not agree with him."

"Yet, Sir Chetwode, that could hardly be

your opinion of *Sanspareil*," said Miss Dacre, "for I think, if I remember right, I had the pleasure of making you encourage our glove manufactory?"

Sir Chetwode looked a little confused. The Duke of St. James, inspirited by his fair ally, rallied, and hoped Sir Chetwode did not back his steed to a fatal extent.—"If," continued he, "I had had the slightest idea, that any friend of Miss Dacre was indulging in such an indiscretion, I certainly would have interfered, and have let him know, that the horse was not to win."

"Is that a fact?" asked Sir Tichborne Tichborne of Tichborne with a sturdy voice.

"Can a Yorkshireman doubt it?" rejoined the Duke. "Was it possible for any one but a mere Newmarket dandy to have entertained for a moment the supposition, that any one but May Dacre should be the Queen of the St. Leger?"

"I have heard something of this before,"

said Sir Tichborne, "but I did not believe it. A young friend of mine consulted me upon the subject. 'Would you advise me,' said he, 'to settle?'—'Why,' said I, 'if you can prove any bubble, my opinion is——don't; but if you cannot prove any thing, my opinion is——do.'"

"Very just!—Very true!" were murmured by many in the neighbourhood of the oracle; by no one with more personal sincerity than Lady Tichborne herself.

"I will write to my young friend," continued the Baronet.

"Certainly not," said May Dacre. "His Grace's candour must not be abused. I have no idea of being robbed of my well-earned honours.—Sir Tichborne, private conversation must be respected, and the sanctity of domestic life must not be profaned. If the tactics of Doncaster are no longer to be fair war, why, half the families in the Riding will be ruined!"

"Still—" said Sir Tichborne.

But Mr. Dacre, like a deity in a Trojan battle, interposed, and asked his opinion of a gamekeeper.

"I hope you are a great sportsman," said Miss Dacre to the Duke, "for this is the very palace of Nimrod?"

"I have hunted; it was not very disagreeable. I sometimes shoot; it is not very stupid."

"Then, in fact, I perceive that you are a heretic.—Lord Faulconcourt, his Grace is moralizing on the barbarity of the chace."

"Then he has never had the pleasure of hunting in company with Miss Dacre."

"Do you indeed follow the hounds?" asked the Duke.

"Sometimes, do worse—ride over them; but Lord Faulconcourt is fast emancipating me from the trammels of my frippery foreign education, and I have no doubt that, in another season, I shall fling off quite in style."

"You remember Mr. Annesley?" asked the Duke.

"It is difficult to forget him. He always seemed, to me, to think that the world was made on purpose for him to have the pleasure of 'cutting' it."

"Yet he was your admirer!"

"Yes, and once paid me a compliment. He told me it was the only one that he had ever uttered."

"Oh! Charley, Charley! this is excellent. We shall have a tale when we meet. What *was* the compliment?"

"It would be affectation in me to pretend that I have forgotten it. Nevertheless, you must excuse me."

"Pray, pray let me have it?"

"Perhaps, you will not like it?"

"Now, I must hear it."

"Well then, he said, that talking to me was the only thing that consoled him for having to dine with you, and to dance with Lady Shropshire"

"Charles is jealous," drawled the Duke.

"Of her Grace?" asked Miss Dacre, with much anxiety.

"No; but Charles is aged, and once, when he dined with me, was taken for my uncle."

The ladies retired, and the gentlemen sat barbarously long. Sir Chetwode Chetwode of Chetwode, and Sir Tichborne Tichborne of Tichborne, were two men who drank wine independent of fashion, and exacted, to the last glass, the identical quantity which their fathers had drunk half a century before, and to which they had been used almost from their cradle. The only subject of conversation was sporting. Terrible shots, more terrible runs, neat barrels, and pretty fencers. The Duke of St. James was not sufficiently acquainted with the geography of the mansion to make a premature retreat, an operation which is looked upon with an evil eye, and which, to be successful, must be prompt and decisive, and executed with the most supercilious *nonchalance*. So, he consoled

himself by a little chat with Lord Mildmay, who sat smiling, handsome, and mustachioed, with an empty glass, and who was as much out of water as he was out of wine. The Duke was not very learned in Parisian society; but still, with the aid of the Duchesse de Berri and the Duchesse de Duras, Leontine Fay, and Lady Stuart de Rothesay, they got on, and made out the time, until Purgatory ceased, and Paradise opened.

For Paradise it was, although there were there assembled some thirty or forty persons not less dull than the majority of our dull race, and in those little tactics that make society less burdensome, perhaps even less accomplished. But a sunbeam will make even the cloudiest day break into smiles: a bounding fawn will banish monotony even from a wilderness; and a glass of claret, or perchance some stronger grape, will convert even the platitude of a goblet of water into a pleasing beverage, —and so May Dacre moved among her guests, shedding light, life, and pleasure.

She was not one who, shrouded in herself, leaves it to chance or fate to amuse the beings whom she has herself assembled within her halls. *Nonchalance* is the *métier* of your modern hostess; and as long as the house be not on fire, or the furniture not kicked, you may be even ignorant who is the priestess of the hospitable fane in which you worship.

They are right. Men shrink from a fussy woman. And few can aspire to regulate the destinies of their species, even in so slight a point as an hour's amusement, without rare powers. There is no greater sin than to be *trop prononcée*. A want of tact is worse than a want of virtue. Some women, it is said, work on pretty well against the tide without the last: I never knew one, who did not sink, who ever dared to sail without the first.

Loud when they should be low, quoting the wrong person, talking on the wrong subject, teazing with notice, excruciating with attentions, disturbing a *tête-à-tête*, in order to make

up a dance; wasting eloquence in persuading a man to participate in amusement, whose reputation depends on his social sullenness; exacting homage with a restless eye, and not permitting the least worthy knot to be untwined without their divinityships' interference; patronizing the meek, anticipating the slow, intoxicated with compliment, plastering with praise, that you in return may gild with flattery; in short, energetic without elegance, active without grace, and loquacious without wit; mistaking bustle for style, raillery for badinage, and noise for gaiety—these are the characters who mar the very career they think they are creating, and who exercise a fatal influence on the destinies of all those who have the misfortune to be connected with them.

Not one of these was she, the lady of our tale. There was a quiet dignity lurking even under her easiest words and actions, which made you feel her notice, a compliment: there was a fascination in her calm smile, and in her

sunlit eye, which made her invitation to amusement, itself a pleasure. If you refused, you were not pressed, but left to that isolation which you appeared to admire; if you assented, you were rewarded with a word, which made you feel how sweet was such society! Her invention never flagged,—her gaiety never ceased; yet both were spontaneous, and often were unobserved. All felt amused, and all were unconsciously her agents. Her word and her example seemed, each instant, to call forth from her companions, new accomplishments, new graces, new sources of joy and of delight. All were surprised that they were so agreeable.

CHAPTER X.

MORNING came, and the great majority of the gentlemen rose early as Aurora. The chace is the favourite pastime of man and boy; yet some preferred plundering their host's preserves, by which means their slumbers were not so brief, and their breakfast less disturbed. The *battue*, however, in time, called forth its band, and then one by one, or two by two, or sometimes even three, leaning on each other's arms, and smiling in each other's faces, the ladies dropped into the breakfast-room at Castle Dacre. There, until two o'clock, a lounging meal might always be obtained, but generally by twelve the coast was clear, for our party

were a natural race of beings, and would have blushed if flaming noon had caught them napping in their easy couches. Our bright bird, May Dacre, too, rose from her bower, full of the memory of the sweetest dreams, and fresh as lilies ere they kiss the sun.

She bends before her ivory crucifix, and gazes on her blessed mother's face, where the sweet Florentine had tinged with light a countenance

> "Too fair for worship, too divine for love!" (5)

And Innocence has prayed for fresh support, and young Devotion told her holy beads. She rises with an eye of mellowed light, and her soft cheek is tinted with the flush that comes from prayer. Guard over her, ye angels! wheresoe'er, and whatsoe'er ye are! For she shall be your meet companion in an after day. Then love you, gentle friend, this sinless child of clay!

The morning passed as mornings ever pass,

where twenty women, for the most part pretty, are met together. Some read, some drew, some worked—all talked. Some wandered in the Library, and wondered why such great books were written. One sketched a favourite hero in the Picture Gallery—a Dacre, who had saved the State or Church—had fought at Cressy, or flourished at Windsor: — another picked a flower out of the Conservatory, and painted its powdered petals. Here, a purse, half-made, promised, when finished quite, to make some hero happy. Then there was chat about the latest fashions, caps and bonnets, *séduisantes*, and sleeves. As the day grew old, some rode, some walked, some drove. A pony-chaise was Lady Faulconcourt's delight, whose arm was roundly turned, and graced the whip; while, on the other hand, Lady St. Jerome rather loved to try the paces of an ambling nag, because her figure was of the sublime; and she looked not unlike an Amazonian queen, particularly when Lord Mildmay was her Theseus.

He was the most consummate, polished gentleman that ever issued from the court of France. He did his friend Dacre the justice to suppose that he was a victim to his barbarous guests; but for the rest of the galloping crew, who rode and shot all day, and in the evening fell asleep just when they were wanted, he shrugged his shoulders, and he thanked his stars! In short, Lord Mildmay was the ladies' man, and in their morning dearth of beaux, to adopt their unanimous expression, "quite a host!"

Then there was archery for those who could draw a bow or point an arrow; and I am yet to learn the sight that is more dangerous for your bachelor to witness, or the ceremony which more perfectly developes all that the sex would wish us to remark, than this "old English" custom. They may talk of waltzing—but I say nothing—only, if I had a son, (but then I have not,) or a pretty daughter, (which I may have, for aught you know,) why then, Miss should march to the archery ground.

But then, before the arrow of our young Camilla skims along the plain, let her take my advice, and discreetly go to some *danseuse*, of a good style, and presenting her with guineas four or five, imbibe a little of her imposing lore.

Lo! my pupil appears in all the grace of attitudes. Mark, as she bends the fatal bow, the line of beauty beautifully defined! Mark the waving arm, the well-planted foot, the gentle inclination of the head — quite Greek. The triumphant arrow whizzes through the air, and transfixes on the spot — the eye of the target. Oh, no! Who cares for that? — the heart of an elder brother.

But to our morning party. With all these resources, all was, of course, free and easy as the air. Your appearance was your own act. If you liked, you might have remained, like a monk or nun, in your cell till dinner-time — but no later. Privacy and freedom are granted you in the morning, that you may not exhaust your powers of pleasing before night, and

that you may reserve for those favoured hours all the new ideas that you have collected in the course of your morning adventures.

But where was he, the hero of our tale? Fencing? Crashing? Hitting? Missing? Is he over, or is he under? Has he killed, or is he killed? — for the last is but the chance of war, and pheasants have the pleasure of sometimes seeing as gay birds as themselves with plumage quite as shattered. But there is no danger of the noble countenance of the Duke of St. James bearing to-day any evidence of the exploits of himself or his companions. His Grace was in one of his sublime fits, and remained in bed till four o'clock. Luigi consoled himself for the bore of this protracted attendance, by diddling the page in waiting, at dominos.

The Duke of St. James was in one of his sublime fits. He had commenced by thinking of May Dacre, and he ended by thinking of himself. He was under that delicious and dreamy

excitement which we experience, when the image of a lovely and beloved object begins to mix itself up with our own intense self-love. She was the heroine rather of an indefinite reverie, than of definite romance. Instead of his own image alone playing about his fancy, her beautiful face and springing figure intruded their exquisite presence. He no longer mused merely on his own voice and wit: he called up her tones of thrilling power; he imagined her in all the triumph of her gay repartee. In his mind's eye, he clearly watched all the graces of her existence. She moved, she gazed, she smiled. Now he was alone, and walking with her in some rich wood, sequestered, warm, solemn, dim, feeding on the music of her voice, and gazing with intenseness on the wakening passion of her devoted eye. Now they rode together, scudded over champaign, galloped down hills, scampered through valleys, all life, and gaiety, and vivacity, and spirit. Now they were in courts and crowds; and he led her with

pride to the proudest king. He covered her with jewels; but the world thought her brighter than his gems. Now they met in the most unexpected and improbable manner: now they parted with a tenderness which subdued their souls even more than rapture. Now he saved her life; now she blessed his existence. Now his reverie was too vague and misty to define its subject. It was a stream of passion, joy, sweet voices, tender tones, exulting hopes, beaming faces, chaste embraces, immortal transports!

For a young gentleman to lie awake on a summer morning, and with his eyes and shutters alike unclosed, to pass six or eight hours in this manner, will to some people perhaps appear impossible. Harsher spirits may even salute my last page or two with the ungentle title of nonsense. If it be nonsense, it is only such, because I have attempted to describe what is perhaps indescribable; but they who have heightened the delight of their existence by an habitual indulgence in reverie, the men-

tal opium, they will sympathize with this faint tracing of delicious joy!

It was three o'clock, and for the twentieth time our hero made an effort to recall himself to the realities of life. How cold, how tame, how lifeless, how imperfect, how inconsecutive, did every thing appear! This is the curse of reverie. But they who revel in its pleasures must bear its pains, and are content. Yet it wears out the brain, and unfits us for social life. They who indulge in it most are the slaves of solitude. They wander in a wilderness, and people it with their voices. They sit by the side of running waters, with an eye more glassy than the stream. The sight of a human being scares them more than a wild beast does a traveller; the conduct of life, when thrust upon their notice, seems only a tissue of adventures without point; and, compared with the creatures of their imagination, human nature seems to send forth only abortions.

"I must up," said the young Duke; "and

this creature on whom I have lived for the last eight hours, who has, in herself, been to me the universe,—this constant companion, this cherished friend, whose voice was Passion, and whose look was Love, will meet me with all the formality of a young lady, all the coldness of a person who has never even thought of me, since she saw me last. Damnable delusion! To-morrow, I will get up, and hunt."

He called Luigi, and a shower-bath assisted him in taking a more healthy view of affairs. Yet his faithful fancy recurred to her again. He must indulge it a little. He left off dressing, and flung himself in a chair. Luigi offered the Eau de Cologne. Without looking at it, his Grace tossed the richly cut bottle into a corner. It broke. Reverie is a most expensive luxury.

"And yet," he continued, "when I think of it again, there surely can be no reason that this should not turn into a romance of real life. I perceived that she was a little piqued, when we

first met at Doncaster. Very natural! Very flattering! I should have been piqued. Certainly, I behaved decidedly bad. But how, in the name of Heaven, was I to know that she was the brightest little being that ever breathed! Well, I am here now! She has got her wish. And I think an evident alteration has already taken place. But she must not melt too quickly. She will not,—she will do nothing but what is exquisitely proper. How I do love this child! I dote upon her very image. It is the very thing that I have always been wanting. The women call me inconstant. I have never been *constant*. But they will not listen to us without we feign feelings, and then they upbraid us for not being influenced by them. I have sighed, I have sought, I have wept, for what I now have found. What would she give to know what is passing in my mind! By Heavens! there is no blood in England that has a better chance of being a Duchess!"

CHAPTER XI.

A CANTER is the cure for every evil, and brings the mind back to itself sooner than all the lessons of Chrysippus and Crantor. It is the only process that, at the same time, calms your feelings, and elevates your spirits, banishes blue devils, and raises you to the society of "angels ever bright and fair." It clears the mind; it cheers the heart. It is the best preparation for all enterprises, for it puts a man in good humour both with the world and himself; and, whether you are going to make a speech, or scribble a scene — whether you are about to conquer the world, or yourself,——order your horse. As you bound along, your wit

will brighten, and your eloquence blaze, your courage grow more adamantine, and your generous feelings burn with a livelier flame. And when the exercise is over, the excitement does not cease, as when it grows from music, for your blood is up, and the brilliancy of your eye is fed by your bubbling pulses. Then, my young friend, take my advice — rush into the world, and triumph will grow out of your quick life, like Victory bounding from the palm of Jove!

Our Duke ordered his horses, and as he rattled along, recovered from the enervating effects of his soft reverie. On his way home, he fell in with Mr. Dacre and the two Baronets, returning on their hackneys from a hard-fought field.

"Gay sport?" asked his Grace.

"Twelve hours, by George!" answered Sir Chetwode. "I only hope Jack Wilson will take care of poor Fanny. I did not half like leaving her. Your Grace does not join us?"

"I mean to do so; but I am unfortunately a late riser."

"Hem!" said Sir Tichborne.—The monosyllable meant much.

"I have a horse which I think will suit your Grace," said Mr. Dacre, "and to which, in fact, you are entitled, for it bears the name of your house. You have ridden Hauteville, Sir Tichborne?"

"Yes; fine beast!"

"I shall certainly try his powers," said the Duke. "When is your next field-day?"

"Thursday," said Sir Tichborne; "but we shall be too early for you, I am afraid," with a gruff smile.

"Oh! no," said the young Duke, who saw his man; "I assure you, I have been up to-day nearly two hours. Let us get on."

The first person that his Grace's eye met, when he entered the room in which they assembled before dinner, was Mrs. Dallington Vere.

Dinner was a favourite moment with the Duke of St. James, during this visit at Castle Dacre, since it was the only time in the day that, thanks to his rank, which he now doubly valued, he could enjoy a *tête-à-tête* with its blooming mistress.

"I am going to hunt," said the Duke, "and I am to ride Hauteville. I hope you will set me an example on Thursday, and that I shall establish my character with Sir Tichborne."

"I am to lead on that day a bold band of archers. I have already too much neglected my practising, and I fear that my chance of the silver arrow is very slight."

"I have betted upon you with every body," said the Duke of St. James.

"Remember Doncaster! I am afraid that May Dacre will again be the occasion of your losing your money."

"But now I am on the right side. Together, we must conquer."

"I have a presentiment that our union will not be a very fortunate one."

"Then I am ruined," said his Grace with rather a serious tone.

"I hope you have not staked any thing upon such nonsense," said May Dacre.

"I have staked every thing," said his Grace.

"Talking of stakes," said Lord St. Jerome, who pricked up his ears at a congenial subject, "do you know what they are going to do about that affair of Anderson's?"

"What does he say for himself?" asked Sir Chetwode.

"He says that he had no intention of embezzling the money, but that, as he took it for granted the point could never be decided, he thought it was against the usury laws to allow money to be idle."

"That fellow has always got an answer," said Sir Tichborne "I hate men who have always got an answer. There is no talking common sense with them. They think no more

of contradicting a gentleman than Ripley does of riding without stirrups, which I never could see the beauty of."

The Duke made his escape to-day, and emboldened by his illustrious example, Charles Faulcon, Lord St. Jerome, and some other heroes followed, to the great disgust of Sir Chetwode Chetwode of Chetwode, and Sir Tichborne Tichborne of Tichborne.

As the evening glided on, conversation naturally fell upon the amusements of society.

"I am sure we are tired of dancing every night," said May Dacre. "I wonder if we could introduce any novelty.—What think you, Bertha? You can always suggest."

"You remember the *tableaux vivans?*" said Mrs. Dallington Vere.

"Beautiful! but too elaborate a business, I fear, for us. I want something more impromptu. The *tableaux* are nothing without the most brilliant and accurate costume, and to obtain that, we must work at least for a week, and

then after all, in all probability, a failure. *Ils sont trop recherchés,*" she said, lowering her voice to Mrs. Dallington, "*pour nous ici.* They must spring out of a society used to such exhibitions."

"I have a costume dress here," said the Duke of St. James.

"And I have an uniform," said Lord Mildmay.

"And then," said Mrs. Dallington, "there are cachemires, and scarfs, and jewels to be collected. I see, however, you think it impossible."

"I fear so. However, we will think of it. In the mean time, what shall we do now? Suppose we act a fairy tale!"

"None of the girls can act," said Mrs. Dallington, with a look of kind pity.

"Let us teach them. That itself will be an amusement. Suppose we act Cinderella? There is the music of Cendrillon, and you can compose when necessary, as you go on. Clara Howard!" said May Dacre, "come here, love!

We want you to be Cinderella in a little play?"

"I act! oh! dear May! How can you laugh at me so! I cannot act."

"You will not have to speak. Only just move about as I direct you, while Bertha plays music."

"Oh! dear May, I cannot indeed! I never did act. Ask Eugenia!"

"Eugenia! If *you* are afraid, I am sure she will faint. I asked you, because I thought you were just the person for it."

"But only think," said poor Clara, with an imploring voice, "*to act*, May! Why, acting is the most difficult thing in the world. Acting is quite a dreadful thing. I know many ladies who will not act."

"But it is not *acting*, Clara. Well! I will be Cinderella, and you shall be one of the sisters?"

"No, dear May!"

"Well then, the Fairy?"

"No, dear, dear, dear May!"

"Well, your Grace, what am I to do with this rebellious troop?"

"Let me be Cinderella!"

"It is astonishing," said May Dacre, "the difficulty which you encounter in England, if you try to make people the least amusing, or vary the regular dull routine, which announces dancing as the beautiful of diversion, and cards as the sublime."

"We are barbarians," said the Duke.

"We were not," said May Dacre. "What are *tableaux*, or acted charades, or romances, to masques, which were the splendid and various amusement of our ancestors. Last Christmas, we performed Comus here with great effect; but then we had Arundel, and he is an admirable actor."

"Curse Arundel!" thought the Duke. "I had forgotten him."

"I do not wonder," said Mrs. Dallington Vere, "at people objecting to act regular

plays, for, independent of the objections,—not that I think any thing of them myself,—which are urged against 'private theatricals,' the fact is, to get up a play is a very tremendous business, and one or two is your bound. But masques, where there is so little to learn by rote, a great consideration, where music and song are so exquisitely introduced, where there is such an admirable opportunity for brilliant costume, and where the scene may be beautiful without change,—such an important point,—I cannot help wondering that this national diversion is not revived."

"Suppose we were to act a Romance without the costume?" said the Duke. "Let us consider it a rehearsal. And perhaps the Misses Howard will have no objection to sing?"

"It is difficult to find a suitable romance," said May Dacre. "All our modern English ones are too full of fine poetry. We tried once an old ballad, but it was too long. Last Christmas, we got up a good many, and Arundel,

Isabella, and myself, used to scribble some nonsense for the occasion. But I am afraid they are all either burnt or taken away. I will look in the music-case."

She went to the music-case with the Duke and Mrs. Dallington.

"No," she continued, "not one, not a single one. But what are these?" She looked at some lines written in pencil in a music-book. "Oh! here is something, too slight, but it will do.—You see," she continued, reading it to the Duke, "by the introduction of the same line in every verse, describing the same action, a back-scene is, as it were, created, and the story, if you can call it such, proceeds in front. Really, I think, we might make something of this."

Mr. Dacre and some others were at whist. The two Baronets were together, talking over the morning's sport. *Ecarté* covered a flirtation between Lord Milford and Lady St. Jerome. Miss Dacre assembled her whole

troop; and like a manager with a new play, read in the midst of them the ballad, and gave them directions for their conduct. A japan screen was unfolded at the end of the room. Two couches indicated the limits of the stage. Then taking her guitar, she sang with a sweet voice and arch simplicity, these simpler lines:—

I.

Childe Dacre stands in his father's hall
While all the rest are dancing;
Childe Dacre gazes on the wall,
While brightest eyes are glancing.
Then prythee tell me, Gentles gay!
What makes our Childe so dull to-day?

Each verse was repeated. In the background, they danced a cotillon. In the front, the Duke of St. James, as Childe Dacre, leant against the wall, with arms folded, and eyes fixed,—in short, in most romantic mood, and in an attitude which commanded great applause.

II.

I cannot tell, unless it be,
  While all the rest are dancing,
The Lady Alice, on the sea,
  With brightest eyes is glancing,
Or muses on the twilight hour,
Will bring Childe Dacre to her bower.

Mrs. Dallington Vere advances as the Lady Alice. Her walk is abrupt; her look anxious and distracted; she seems to be listening for some signal. She falls into a musing attitude, motionless and graceful as a statue. Clara Howard alike marvels at her genius and her courage.

III.

Childe Dacre hears the curfew chime,
  While all the rest are dancing;
Unless I find a fitting rhyme,
  Oh! here ends my Romancing!
But see! her lover's at her feet!
Oh! words of joy! oh! meeting sweet!

The Duke advances: chivalric passion in his

every gesture. The Lady Alice rushes to his arms, with that look of trembling transport, which tells the tale of stolen love. They fall into a group, which would have made the fortune of an Annual.

IV.

Then let us hope, when next I sing,
  And all the rest are dancing,
Our Childe a gentle bride may bring,
  All other joys enhancing.
Then we will bless the twilight hour,
That call'd him to a lady's bower.

The Duke led Mrs. Dallington to the dancers with courtly grace. There was great applause, but the spirit of fun and one-and-twenty inspired him, and he led off a gallop. In fact, it was a most elegant romp. The two Baronets started from their slumbers, and Lord Mildmay called for Mademoiselle Dacre. The call was echoed. Miss Dacre yielded to the public voice, and acted to the life, the gratified and conde-

scending air of a first-rate performer. Lord Mildmay called for Madame Dallington. Miss Dacre led on her companion, as Sontag would Malibran. There was no wreath at hand, but the Duke of St. James robbed his coat of its rose, and offered it on his knee to Mademoiselle, who presented it with Parisian feeling to her rival. The scene was as superb as anything at the *Académie.*

CHAPTER XII.

"We certainly must have a Masque," said the young Duke, as he threw himself into his chair, satisfied with his performance.

"You must open, Hauteville, with one," said Mrs. Dallington.

"A capital idea; but we will practise at Dacre first."

"When is Hauteville to be finished?" asked Mrs. Dallington. "I shall really complain if we are to be kept out of it much longer. I believe I am the only person in the Riding who has not been there."

"I have been there," said the Duke, "and am afraid I must go again; for Sir Carte has

just come down for a few days, and I promised to meet him. It is a sad bore. I wish it were finished."

"Take me with you," said Mrs. Dallington, —"take us all, and let us make a party."

"An admirable idea," exclaimed the young Duke, with a brightening countenance. "What admirable ideas you have, Mrs. Dallington! This is, indeed, turning business into pleasure! What says our hostess?"

"Oh! I will join you."

"To-morrow, then?" said the Duke.

"To-morrow! You are rapid!"

"Never postpone, never prepare: — that is your own rule. To-morrow, to-morrow — all must go."

"Papa, will you go to-morrow to Hauteville?"

"Are you serious?"

"Yes," said May Dacre: "we never postpone; we never prepare."

"But do not you think a day, at least, had

better intervene;" urged Mr. Dacre; "we shall be unexpected."

"I vote for to-morrow," said the Duke.

"To-morrow, to-morrow!" was the universal exclamation. To-morrow was carried.

"I will write to Blanche at once," said the Duke.

Mrs. Dallington Vere ran for the writing materials, and his Grace indited the following pithy note.

'Half-past Ten.—Castle Dacre.

"DEAR SIR CARTE,

"OUR party here intend to honour Hauteville with a visit to-morrow, and anticipate the pleasure of viewing the improvements, with yourself for their cicerone. Let Rawdon know immediately of this. They tell me here that the sun rises about six. As we shall not be with you till noon, I have no doubt your united energies will be able to make all requisite preparations. We may

be thirty or forty. Believe me, dear Sir Carte, Your faithful servant,

"St. James.

" Carlstein bears this, which you will receive in an hour. Let me have a line by return."

CHAPTER XIII.

It was a morning all dew and sunshine, soft yet bright, just fit for a hawking party, for dames of high degree, feathered cavaliers, ambling palfreys, and tinkling bells. Our friends rose early, and assembled punctually. All went, and all went on horseback; but they sent before a couple of carriages for the return, in case the ladies should be wearied with excessive pleasure. The cavalcade, for it was no less, broke into parties which were often out of sight of each other. The Duke and Lord St. Jerome, Clara Howard and Charles Faulcon, May Dacre and Mrs. Dallington, formed one, and, as they flattered themselves, not the least brilliant.

They were all in high spirits, and his Grace lectured on riding-habits with erudite enthusiasm.

Their road lay through a country wild and woody, where crag and copse beautifully intermixed with patches of the richest cultivation. Half way, they passed Rosemount, a fanciful pavilion where the Dukes of St. James sometimes sought that elegant simplicity, which was not afforded by all the various charms of their magnificent Hauteville. At length they arrived at the park-gate of the castle, which might itself have passed for a tolerable mansion. It was ancient and embattled, flanked by a couple of sturdy towers, and gave a noble promise of the baronial pile which it announced. The park was a petty principality; and its apparently illimitable extent, its rich variety of surface, its ancient woods, and numerous deer, attracted the attention and the admiration even of those who had been born in these magical enclosures.

Away they cantered over the turf, each moment with their blood more sparkling. A turn in the road, and Hauteville with its donjon keep and lordly flag, and many windowed line of long perspective; its towers, and turrets, and terraces, bathed with the soft autumnal sun, met their glad sight.

"Your Majesty is welcome to my poor castle!" said the young Duke, bowing with head uncovered to May Dacre.

"Nay, we are at the best but captive princesses about to be immured in that fearful keep; and this is the way you mock us!"

"I am content that you shall be my prisoner."

"A struggle for freedom!" said May Dacre, looking back to Mrs. Dallington, and she galloped towards the castle.

Lord Mildmay and Lady St. Jerome cantered up, and the rest soon assembled. Sir Carte came forward all smiles, with a clerk of the works bearing a portfolio of plans. A

crowd of servants, for the Duke maintained a full establishment at Hauteville, advanced, and the fair equestrians were dismounted. They shook their habits and their curls, vowed that riding was your only exercise, and that dust in the earthly economy was a blunder. And then they entered the castle.

Room after room, gallery after gallery——you know the rest. Shall I describe the silk hangings, and the reverend tapestry, the agate tables, and the tall screens, the china, and the armour, the state beds, and the curious cabinets, and the family pictures mixed up so quaintly with Italian and Flemish art? But I pass from meek Madonnas and seraphic saints, —from gleaming Claudes, and Guidos soft as Eve,—from Rubens' satyrs and Albano's boys, and even from those gay and natural medleys —paintings that cheer the heart — where fruit and flower, with their brilliant bloom, call to a feast the butterfly and bee;—I pass from these to square-headed ancestors by Holbein, all black

elvet and gold chains; cavaliers, by Vandyke, all lace and spurs, with pointed beards, that did more execution even than their pointed swords; patriots and generals, by Kneller, in Blenheim wigs and Steenkirk cravats, all robes and armour; scarlet judges that supported ship-money, and purple bishops, who had not been sent to the Tower. Here was a wit who had sipped his coffee at Button's, and there some mad Alcibiades duke who had exhausted life ere he had finished youth, and yet might be consoled for all his flashing follies, could he witness the bright eyes that lingered on his countenance, while they glanced over all the patriotism and all the piety, all the illustrious courage and all the historic craft, which, when living, it was daily told him that he had shamed. Ye dames! with dewy eyes, that Lely drew, have I forgotten you? No! by that sleepy loveliness, that reminds us that night belongs to beauty, ye were made for memory! And oh! our grandmothers, that I now look

upon his girls, breathing in Reynolds's playful canvass, let me also pay my homage to your grace! '

The Chapel, where you might trace art from the richly Gothic tomb, designed by some neighbouring abbot, to the last effort of Flaxman; the Riding-house, where, brightly framed, looked down upon you with a courtly smile the first and gartered duke, who had been Master of the Horse, were alike visited, and alike admired. They mounted the summit of the round-tower, and looked around upon the broad county, which they were proud to call their own. Amid innumerable seats, where blazed the hearths of the best blood of England, they recognised, with delight, the dome of Dacre and the woods of Dallington. They walked along a terrace not unworthy of the promenade of a court; they visited the flower gardens, where the peculiar style of every nation was in turn imitated; they loitered in the vast conservatories, which were themselves a

palace; they wandered in the wilderness, where the invention of consummate art presented them with the ideal of nature. In this poetic solitude, where all was green, and still, and sweet, or where the only sound was falling water, or fluttering birds, the young Duke recurred to the feelings which, during the last momentous week, had so mastered his nature, and he longed to wind his arm round the beautiful being, without whom this enchanting domain was a dreary waste.

They assembled in a green retreat, where the energetic Sir Carte had erected a *marquée*, and where a collation greeted the eyes of those who were well prepared for it. Rawdon had also done his duty, and the guests, who were aware of the sudden manner in which the whole affair had arisen, wondered at the magic which had produced a result worthy of a week's preparation. But it is a great thing to be a young Duke The pasties, and the venison, and the game, the pines, and the peaches, and the grapes, the

cakes, and the confectionary, and the ices, which proved that the still-room at Hauteville was not an empty name, were all most popular. But the wines — they were something miraculous! And as the finest cellars in the country had been ransacked for excellence and variety, it is not wonderful that their produce obtained a panegyric. There was hock of a century old, which made all stare, though I, for my part, cannot see, or rather taste, the beauty of this antiquity. Wine, like woman, in my opinion, should be young,—so I raise my altar to the infant Bacchus; but this is not the creed of the million, nor was it the persuasion of Sir Chetwode Chetwode of Chetwode, or of Sir Tichborne Tichborne of Tichborne, good judges both. The Johannisberger quite converted them. They no longer disliked the young Duke. They thought him a fool, to be sure, but at the same time a very good-natured one. In the mean time, all were interested, and Carlstein with his key bugle, from out a neighbour-

ing brake, afforded the only luxury that was wanting.

It is six o'clock — carriages are ordered, and horses are harnessed. Back, back to Dacre! But not at the lively rate at which they had left that lordly hall this morning. They are all alike inclined to move slowly; they are silent, yet serene and satisfied; they ponder upon the reminiscences of a delightful morning, and also of a delightful meal. Perhaps, they are a little weary; perhaps, they wish to gaze upon the sunset.

It is eight o'clock, and they enter the park-gates. Dinner is universally voted a bore, even by the Baronets. Coffee covers the retreat of many a wearied bird to her evening bower. The rest lounge on a couch or sofa, or chew the cud of memory on an Ottoman It was a day of pleasure which had been pleasant. That was certain, but that was past. Who is to be Duchess of St. James? Answer me this! — May Dacre, or Bertha Vere, or Clara Howard?

Lady St. Jerome, is it to be a daughter of thy house? Lady Faulconcourt, art thou to be hailed as the unrivalled mother? 'Tis mystery all, as must always be the future of this world. We muse, we plan, we hope, but nought is certain but that which is nought; for, a question answered, a doubt satisfied, an end attained—what are they but fit companions for clothes out of fashion, cracked china, and broken fans?

Our hero was neither wearied nor sleepy, for his mind was too full of exciting fancies to think of the interests of his body. As all were withdrawing, he threw his cloak about him, and walked on the terrace. It was a night soft as the rhyme that sighs from Rogers' shell, and brilliant as a phrase just turned by Moore. The thousand stars smiled from their blue pavilions, and the moon shed the mild light that makes a lover muse. Fragrance came in airy waves from trees rich with the golden orange, and from out the woods there ever

and anon arose a sound, deep and yet hushed, and mystical, and soft. It could not be the wind!

His heart was full, his hopes were sweet, his fate pledged on a die. And in this shrine where all was like his love, immaculate and beautiful, he vowed a faith which had not been returned. Such is the madness of love! Such is the magic of beauty!

Music rose upon the air. Some huntsmen were practising their horns. The triumphant strain elevated his high hopes,—the tender tone accorded with his emotions. He paced up and down the terrace in the most excited reverie, fed by the music. In imagination, she was with him: she spoke, she smiled, she loved. He gazed upon her beaming countenance; his soul thrilled with tones which only she could utter. He pressed her to his throbbing and tumultuous breast!

The music stopped. He fell from his seventh Heaven. He felt all the exhaustion of his pro-

longed reverie. All was flat, dull, unpromising. The moon seemed dim, the stars were surely fading, the perfume of the trees was faint, the wind of the woods was a howling demon. Exhausted, dispirited, ay! almost desperate,—with a darkened soul and staggering pace, he regained his chamber.

CHAPTER XIV.

THERE is nothing more strange, but nothing more certain, than the different influence which the seasons of night and day exercise upon the moods of our minds. Him whom the moon sends to bed with a head full of misty meaning, the sun will summon in the morning with a brain clear and lucid as his beam. Twilight makes us pensive; Aurora is the goddess of activity. Despair curses at midnight; Hope blesses at noon.

And the bright beams of Phœbus — why should this good old name be forgotten?— called up our Duke, rather later than a monk at matins, in a less sublime disposition than

that in which he had paced among the orange trees of Dacre. His passion remained, but his poetry was gone. He was all confidence, and gaiety, and love, and panted for the moment when he could place his mother's coronet on the only head that was worthy to share the proud fortunes of the house of Hauteville.

"Luigi, I will rise. What is going on today?"

"The gentlemen are all out, your Grace."

"And the ladies?"

"Are going to the Archery Ground, your Grace."

"Ah! she will be there, Luigi!"

"Yes, your Grace."

"My robe, Luigi."

"Yes, your Grace."

"I forgot what I was going to say.—Luigi!"

"Yes, your Grace."

"Luigi, Luigi, Luigi," hummed the Duke, perfectly unconscious, and beating time with his brush. His valet stared, but more when

His lord, with eyes fixed on the ground, fell into a soliloquy, not a word of which, most provokingly, was audible, except to my reader.

"How beautiful she looked yesterday upon the keep, when she tried to find Dacre! I never saw such eyes in my life! I must speak to Lawrence immediately. I think I must have her face painted in four positions, like that picture of Lady Alice Gordon, by Sir Joshua. Her full face is sublime; and yet there is a piquancy in the profile, which I am not sure— and yet again, when her countenance is a little bent towards you, and her neck gently turned, I think that is, after all—but then when her eyes meet yours, full—oh! yes! yes! yes! That first look at Doncaster! It is impressed upon my brain like self-consciousness. I never can forget it. But then her smile! When she sang on Tuesday night—Pretty Puss! By Heavens!" he exclaimed aloud, "life with such a creature is immortality!"

He advanced with rapid strides, with his

razor in hand,—Luigi retreated,—the Duke pushed on,—Luigi was in a corner,—in a moment his throat must have been cut. He coughed: the Duke started.

"Ah! Luigi, am I up? Archery, eh? Then, I wear my green frock."

About one o'clock, the Duke descended into empty chambers. Not a soul was to be seen. The birds had flown. He determined to go to the Archery Ground. He opened the door of the music-room. He found May Dacre alone at a table, writing. She looked up, and his heart yielded, as her eye met his.

"You do not join the nymphs?" asked the Duke.

"I have lent my bow," she said, "to an able substitute."

She resumed her task, which he perceived was copying music. He advanced, he seated himself at the table, and began playing with a pen. He gazed upon her, his soul thrilled with unwonted sensations, his frame shook with emo-

tions which, for a moment, deprived him even of speech. At length he spoke in a low and tremulous tone—

"I fear I am disturbing you, Miss Dacre?"

"By no means," she said with a courteous air; and then remembering she was a hostess, "Is there anything that your Grace requires?"

"Much—more than I can hope. Oh! Miss Dacre, suffer me to tell you, how much I admire, how much I love you!"

She started, she stared at him with distended eyes, and her small mouth was open like a ring.

"My Lord!"

"Yes!" he continued in a rapid and impassioned tone. "I at length find an opportunity of giving way to feelings which it has been long difficult for me to control. Oh! beautiful being, tell me—tell me that I am blessed!"

"My Lord! I—I am most honoured—pardon me if I say, most surprised."

"Yes! from the first moment that your ineffable loveliness rose on my vision, my mind

had fed upon your image. Our acquaintance has only realized, of your character, all that my imagination had preconceived. Such unrivalled beauty, such unspeakable grace, could only have been the companions of that exquisite taste, and that charming delicacy, which, even to witness, has added great felicity to my existence. Oh! tell me—tell me that they shall be for me something better than a transient spectacle. Condescend to share the fortune and the fate of one, who only esteems his lot in life, because it enables him to offer you a station not utterly unworthy of your transcendent excellence!"

"My Lord, I have permitted you to proceed too far. For your, for my own sake, I should sooner have interfered, but, in truth, I was so perfectly astounded at your unexpected address, that I have but just succeeded in recalling my scattered senses. Let me again express to you my acknowledgments for an honour which I feel is great; but permit me to regret, that for your offer of your hand and fortune, these acknowledgments are all I can return."

"Miss Dacre! am I then to wake to the misery of being rejected?"

"A little week ago, my Lord, we were strangers. It would be hard, if it were in the power of either of us now to deliver the other to *misery*."

"You are offended, then, at the presumption which, on so slight an acquaintance, has aspired to your hand. It is indeed a high possession. I thought only of you, not of myself. Your perfections require no time for recognition. Perhaps my imperfections require time for indulgence. Let me then hope!"

"My Lord, you have misconceived my meaning, and I regret that a foolish phrase should occasion you the trouble of fresh solicitude, and me the pain of renewed refusal. In a word, it is not in my power to accept your hand."

He rose from the table, and stifled the groan which struggled in his throat. He paced up and down the room with an agitated step and a convulsed brow, which marked the contest of

his passions. But he was not desperate. His heart was full of high resolves, and mighty meanings, indefinite but great. He felt like some conqueror, who marking the battle going against him, proud in his infinite resources and invincible power, cannot credit the madness of a defeat. And the lady, she leant her head upon her delicate arm, and screened her countenance from his scrutiny.

He advanced.

"Miss Dacre! pardon this prolonged intrusion; forgive this renewed discourse. But let me only hope, that a more favoured rival is the cause of my despair, and I will thank you—"

"My Lord," she said, looking up with a faint blush, but with a flashing eye, and in an audible and even energetic tone—"the question you ask is neither fair nor manly; but as you choose to press me, I will say, that it requires no recollection of a third person to make me decline the honour which you intended me."

"Miss Dacre! you speak in anger, almost in bitterness. Believe me," he added, rather with an air of pique, "had I imagined from your conduct towards me, that I was an object of dislike, I would have spared you this inconvenience, and myself this humiliation."

"My Lord, as mistress of Castle Dacre, my conduct to all its inmates is the same. The Duke of St. James, indeed, had both hereditary and personal claims to be considered here as something better than a mere inmate; but your Grace has elected to dissolve all connection with our house, and I am not desirous of assisting you in again forming any."

"Harsh words, Miss Dacre!"

"Harsher truth, my Lord Duke," said Miss Dacre, rising from her seat, and twisting a pen with agitated energy.—"You have prolonged this interview, not I. Let it end, for I am not skilful in veiling my mind; and I should regret, here at least, to express what I have hitherto succeeded in concealing."

"It cannot end thus," said His Grace: "let me, at any rate, know the worst. You have, if not too much kindness, at least too much candour, to part so!"

"I am at a loss to understand," said Miss Dacre, "what other object our conversation can have for your Grace, than to ascertain my feelings, which I have already declared more than once upon a point, which you have already more than once urged. If I have not been sufficiently explicit, or sufficiently clear, let me tell you, Sir, that nothing but the request of a parent whom I adore, would have induced me even to speak to the person who had dared to treat him with contempt."

"Miss Dacre!"

"Your Grace is moved, or you affect to be moved. 'Tis well:—if a word from a stranger can thus affect you, you may be better able to comprehend the feelings of that person whose affections you have so long outraged—your equal in blood, my Lord Duke, your superior in all other respects."

"Beautiful being!" said his Grace advancing, falling on his knee, and seizing her hand—"Pardon, pardon, pardon! Like your admirable sire, forgive—cast into oblivion all remembrance of my fatal youth. Is not your anger—is not this moment a bitter, an utter expiation for all my folly, all my thoughtless, all my inexperienced folly,—for it was no worse? On my knees, and in the face of Heaven, let me pray you to be mine. I have staked my happiness upon this venture. In your power is my fate. On you it depends whether I shall discharge my duty to society, to the country to which I owe so much,—or whether I shall move in it without an aim, an object, or a hope. Think—think only of the sympathy of our dispositions—the similarity of our tastes. Think—think only of the felicity that might be ours. Think of the universal good that we might achieve! Is there anything that human reason could require, that we could not command?—any object which human mind could imagine,

that we could not obtain? And, as for myself, I swear that I will be the creature of your will. Nay, nay! — oaths are mockery — vows are idle! Is it possible to share existence with you, beloved girl! without watching for your every wish — without —"

"My Lord, my Lord, this must end. You do not recommend yourself to me by this rhapsody. What do you know of me, that you should feel all this? I am rather different from what you expected—that, that is all. Another week, and another woman may command a similar effusion. I do not believe you to be insincere. There would be more hope for you if you were. You act from impulse, and not from principle. This is your best excuse for your conduct to my father. It is one that I accept, but which will certainly never prevent me from becoming your wife. Farewell!"

"Nay, nay! let us not part in enmity!"

"My Lord, enmity and friendship are very strong words — words that are very much

abused. There is another, which must describe our feelings towards the majority of mankind, and mine towards you. Substitute for enmity —indifference."

She quitted the room: he remained there for some minutes, leaning on the mantel-piece, and then rushed into the Park. He hurried for some miles with the rapid and uncertain step which betokens a tumultuous and disordered mind. At length, he found himself among the ruins of Dacre Abbey. The silence and solemnity of the scene made him conscious, by the contrast, of his own agitated existence,—the desolation of the beautiful ruin accorded with his own crushed and beautiful hopes. He sat himself at the feet of the clustered columns, and, covering his face with his hands, he wept.

They were the first tears that he had shed since childhood, and they were agony. Men weep but once, but then their tears are blood I think almost their hearts must crack a little, so heartless are they ever after. Enough of this.

It is bitter to leave our father's hearth for the first time: bitter is the eve of our return, when a thousand fears rise in our haunted souls. Bitter are hope deferred, and self-reproach, and power unrecognised. Bitter is poverty; bitterer still is debt. It is bitter to be neglected; it is more bitter to be misunderstood.

It is bitter to lose an only child. It is bitter to look upon the land which once was ours. Bitter is a sister's woe, a brother's scrape; bitter a mother's tear, and bitterer still, a father's curse. Bitter are a briefless bag, a curate's bread, a diploma that brings no fee. Bitter is half-pay!

It is bitter to muse on vanished youth; it is bitter to lose an election, or a suit. Bitter are rage suppressed, vengeance unwreaked, and prize-money kept back. Bitter are a failing crop, a glutted market, and a shattering spec. Bitter are rents in arrear, and tithes in kind. Bitter are salaries reduced, and perquisites destroyed. Bitter is a tax, particularly if misapplied; a

rate, particularly if embezzled. Bitter is a trade too full, and bitterer still a trade that has worn out. Bitter is a bore!

It is bitter to lose one's hair or teeth. It is bitter to find our annual charge exceed our income. It is bitter to hear of others' fame, when we are boys. It is bitter to resign the seals we fain would keep. It is bitter to hear the winds blow when we have ships at sea, or friends. Bitter are a broken friendship and a dying love. Bitter a woman scorned, a man betrayed!

Bitter is the secret woe which none can share. Bitter are a brutal husband and a faithless wife, a silly daughter, and a sulky son. Bitter are a losing card, a losing horse. Bitter the public hiss, the private sneer. Bitter are old age without respect, manhood without wealth, youth without fame. Bitter is the east wind's blast; bitter a stepdame's kiss. It is bitter to mark the woe which we cannot relieve. It is bitter to die in a foreign land.

But bitterer far than this, than these, than all, is waking from our first delusion! For then we first feel the nothingness of self—that hell of sanguine spirits. All is dreary, blank, and cold. The sun of hope sets without a ray, and the dim night of dark despair shadows only phantoms. The spirits that guard round us in our pride, have gone.—Fancy, weeping, flies.—Imagination droops her glittering pinions, and sinks into the earth.—Courage has no heart, and love seems a traitor.—A busy demon whispers in our ear that all is vain and worthless, and we among the vainest of a worthless crew!

And so our young friend here now depreciated as much as he had before exaggerated his powers. There seemed not on the earth's face a more forlorn, a more feeble, a less estimable wretch than himself, but just now a hero—Oh! what a fool, what a miserable, contemptible fool was he! With what a light tongue and lighter heart, had he spoken of this woman who despised, who spurned him! His face blushed,

ay! burnt at the remembrance of his reveries and his fond monologues! The very recollection made him shudder with disgust. He looked up to see it any demon were jeering him among the ruins.

His heart was so crushed, that Hope could not find even one desolate chamber to smile in. His courage was so cowed, that far from indulging in the distant romance, to which, under these circumstances, we sometimes fly, he only wondered at the absolute insanity which, for a moment, had permitted him to aspire to her possession. "Sympathy of dispositions! Similarity of tastes, forsooth! Why, we are different existences! — Nature could never have made us for the same world, or with the same clay! Oh! consummate being, why—why did we meet? Why—why are my eyes at length unsealed?— Why—why do I at length feel conscious of my utter worthlessness? Oh! God, I am miserable!"

He arose, and hastened to the house. He

gave orders to Luigi and his people to follow him to Rosemount with all practicable speed, and having left a note for his host with the usual excuse, he mounted his horse, and in half an hour's time, with a countenance like a stormy sea, was galloping through the park gates of Dacre.

END OF THE SECOND BOOK.


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